











# THE DUTCH ANABAPTISTS

THE STONE LECTURES  
DELIVERED AT THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
1918-1919

*By*  
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To Her

WHOSE LOVE AND UNSELFISHNESS  
HAS BEEN MY LIFELONG  
INSPIRATION



## PREFACE

DR. HENRY E. DOSKER, the author of this volume, is the Professor of Church History in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. Doctor Dosker gave this course of lectures at Princeton University a year or more ago. The American Baptist Publication Society examined the manuscript with a view to publication, as it deals with the history of the Dutch Anabaptists, and is naturally of interest to Baptists. The Society requested me to read the manuscript before publication. This I have done and have been greatly interested in it.

It follows, naturally, that there are a number of things in it with which I do not agree and, as I understand the matter, the Publication Society is issuing it because of its wide general interest. Being a discussion of the history of the Dutch Anabaptists by a Presbyterian, it has an added interest. The history of the Dutch Anabaptists is not generally known. Doctor Dosker has done much scholarly research work in connection with the preparation of his manuscript, and while it contains some things which Baptists will not accept, it contains a great deal which will be of exceeding interest to them.

The style is clear and concise, and the book is easy to read, and no doubt it will be read by a large number.

E. Y. MULLINS.





## INTRODUCTION

THE field of geography is practically exhausted ; only here and there, in remote corners of the world, restricted areas are still awaiting the explorer's daring.

It is different in the field of history. The earth's records are practically indestructible, and they remain from generation to generation. Those of history are evanescent ; men and customs change, nations appear and disappear, national boundary-lines are continually melting away, and the written records of human events are perishable. This is specially true of Church History, since ecclesiastical prejudice and bigotry have often deliberately tried to wipe out the literature which explains and illuminates historic movements and ecclesiastical changes.

In the period of the early ages of Christianity, the incessant persecutions, under the Empire, were directed against the written records of the nascent Church, as well as against its living members. And thus, alas, much has been lost which would be of infinite value were it extant today. The word *traditores*, born in Christian circles from this effort, is a mute witness to the extent and intensity of the attempt to rob the Christians of their sacred writings, inasmuch as it was specially directed against the latter.

We are by no means sure that the canon of the New Testament, as we have it today, represents the sum total

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of the literary work of the apostles and their contemporaries. Some apostolic writings we know to be lost, and it is practically inconceivable that of all the apostles only those whose literary remains we possess, should have endeavored to express their ideas in writing.

A similar effort to destroy heretical literature was made, in the age of the Reformation, by the Roman Catholic Church. The Inquisition exerted itself to the utmost in this direction. In Italy and Spain, in Austria and Holland, wholesale heretical book-burnings were a common occurrence. And we learn the efficiency of this combing process from the fate of a book, originating in the circles of *The Oratory of the Divine Love*, in Italy. It was entitled "The Benefits of Christ's Death"—1542—and has usually been ascribed to Aeonio Paleario, till Ranke and Benrath proved it to be written by a Neapolitan monk, Don Benedetto de Mandova. It seemed as if the efforts of the Inquisition to destroy this work had been completely successful, since in thirty years not a copy of the original was thought to exist, and in a century all translations had been apparently wiped out. And yet a single copy remained, which was found at Cambridge in 1853 and published, with a translation, in 1855.

This same bitter attempt to destroy the writings of all heretics was made in Holland in the days of the Reformation, and it exerted itself most keenly against those of the Anabaptists, so that of all their numerous writings only fragments remained here and there.

And it was these scattered fragments which were gathered together in the ten volumes of the *Bibliotheca Re-*

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*formatoria Neerlandica*, 1903-1914. The reading of this ancient Anabaptist and reformatory literature first led me to the plan of attempting to shed some light on the Dutch Anabaptists, who suffered so unspeakably and who exerted an influence on the course of ecclesiastical development in Protestantism wholly disproportionate to their numbers.

I make no special literary claims for this work; its dress may please or displease the reader; I am simply after the facts. Since the language of practically all this literature is a bar to nearly all English and American students of Church History, it seemed worth while to give them at least a glimpse of this *terra incognita*, in which the Dutch Anabaptists have dwelt so long, in a perpetual twilight.

The invitation to deliver the Stone Lectures, 1918-1919, at Princeton, facilitated my plans.

I place this little volume in the hands of the friends and students of Church History. In it they will learn where the Dutch Anabaptists originated, what were the normal and abnormal developments of their history, who were their great leaders, what they believed, what they practised, what were their weaknesses, and what was the secret of their strength, how they were swayed by outside influences, and what is the ecclesiastical status of the remnant today.

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## I

### ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

FOR the last dozen years, the greater portion of my spare time has been devoted to special work on the subject, which I have chosen for the "Stone Lectures" of 1918-1919.

It is an engrossing subject, but shrouded in a good deal of mystery. Most of us know something about the widely extended Anabaptist movement, which paralleled the history of the Reformation. All students of Church History must necessarily touch the life and labors of these Anabaptists, for in the sixteenth century they were to be found in all Europe, but especially in Switzerland, Upper Germany, and Holland. Crushed and practically wiped out everywhere else, they rooted themselves deeply in the soil of Poland, in Northern Germany, and above all in the Low Countries. And thence, whenever persecution passed beyond the sustaining-point, they crossed the channel and moved to England, where their history is closely interwoven with that of the Non-conformists in general and especially with the nascent history of the English Baptists and therefore with the great Baptist denomination of the world.

And yet how meager has been our knowledge of them, and how eagerly some of us have sought for a closer touch and a more intimate knowledge. For they are worth knowing about—are these Anabaptists.

Doctor Harnack used to say, in his classroom, that "they were three hundred years ahead of their time,"

and Doctor Vedder calls them "the radical Reformation." If these estimates are true—and we will test their truth, as we penetrate more deeply into our subject—it may be worth while to endeavor to raise the curtain which hides the stage on which they moved. And for the raising of that curtain I had waited for many years, and my eyes were constantly searching the distant horizon for further light on, and a deeper knowledge of, the Anabaptist movement, especially of that portion of it which was wrapped up in the reformatory efforts in my fatherland.

Fortunately the language was no bar to research work, as most of the available sources were written in modern or middle Dutch. Hooft and Brandt and Wagenaar, Ypey-Dermout, Bilderdyk, and Van Lennep, Fruin and Motley, all had treated them slightly or more exhaustively, as the case seemed to demand. I had read after the elder Cramer and Blaupot Ten Cate, and especially after that eminent authority, Dr. De Hoop Scheffer—and yet there remained a void.

For all these, however scholarly their treatment, afforded only a reflected light, a vision of the Anabaptist world, as they saw it. And I longed for the open vision, for a look face to face, for the writings of these old Anabaptists themselves, or for what their contemporaries had written about them. But these documents were so rare and so jealously guarded that they were practically inaccessible; for the powers of the Church and State alike had vied with each other in their efforts to wipe this heretical literature from the face of the earth.

Their zeal had included Lutheran and Anabaptist and early Calvinistic writings alike, that is to say, they had tried to make a clean sweep of all the literature of the three reformatory waves which had passed over the Lowlands in the first half of the sixteenth century. Naturally,

the greater part of this literature has perished, but some of it remains and what remains is exceedingly precious and rare. Of several of these literary products only one copy is extant, of some two or more; of a few books, examples of different editions are found. And it is this literature that is needed for a proper study of early Dutch Protestantism and, in a special degree, for that of the Anabaptist movement.

Some of our historians, especially the Baptists, went across the sea and searched far and wide for these precious documents. Yet in the end they were compelled, almost without exception, to fall back on second-hand information; because even if they found the documents, they proved inaccessible. And if they succeeded in laying their hands on them, they were confronted with the well-nigh insurmountable obstacle of the language, till many turned away in weariness and disgust.

Then came the blessed year 1902, in which Professor Dr. S. Cramer, of Amsterdam, and Professor Dr. F. Pyper, of Leyden, resolved to assume the heroic task of collecting and editing all this early reformatory Dutch literature, or rather its sacred remains. It was a grueling and thankless task. There was no money in it; I do not think the publication even paid for itself. But these men have given to the students of Church History an actual reprint of these documents, letter for letter, comma for comma, so that one has easy access today to the very sources, which a dozen years ago were beyond the reach of all but a few favored ones. And in this heartless and monotonous labor they spent twelve of the best years of their lives, till ten quarto volumes had been issued and each document had been enriched with an introduction, so searching, so illuminating that the document itself is trebled in value. Doctor Cramer died before the last

volume was issued, but Doctor Pyper was able to see the matter through to the end. Thus the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica* will forever remain a proud monument to the disinterested scholarship of these two great Dutchmen.

### 1. *The Sources*

For the preparation of these lectures I have then first of all availed myself of these ten volumes. They are a rich storehouse of information concerning the entire Anabaptist movement, but especially that in Holland. But the language remains a serious drawback. Were they written in modern Dutch, the problem would be comparatively easy to solve. But they are written in the Dutch of the sixteenth century, a composite tongue, with a weird spelling and a weirder punctuation, so that even to a Dutchman of fair attainments they are somewhat of a problem. Even the learned editors had here and there to guess at the meaning of a word, some long-lost and forgotten idiom. Yet no sooner has one mastered the key to their understanding but he finds himself in a surprisingly rich mine of information concerning the Dutch Anabaptists. Nay I do not hesitate to say that whoever will hereafter seriously set himself to the task of studying this subject will have to reckon with these ten volumes. Here we get a glimpse of the peculiar *Weltanschauung* of these Anabaptists; of their puritanical, almost ascetic view of life; of their theology, in many points radically at variance with Rome and the Reformers alike. Here we find the secret of their strength as well as their weakness, of their internal divisions and endless quarrels, but also of the sublimity of their courage and countless martyrdoms.

One cannot peruse these documents, hoary with age, without an increasing reverence for a people apparently

so weak yet so strong; loyal to their convictions to the bitter end, ever at variance within the family circle, yet always showing a united front to a common foe.

Of these ten volumes, the second, the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth are of special importance; but there is not one of the ten from which either direct or reflected light does not fall on our subject.

In the second volume we find "The Sacrifice of the Lord,"<sup>1</sup> the pathetic story of their martyrdoms; to which is added a collection of songs, written either by or about the martyrs, entitled "A Book of Songs."<sup>2</sup> In the fifth volume we find Henrick Roll's "The Key to the Secret of the Supper,"<sup>3</sup> of which only three copies are known to exist; here also Hoffman's "Ordinance of God"<sup>4</sup> and his "Explanation of the Captive and the Free Will."<sup>5</sup> In this volume are two works of Adam Pastor: his "Difference Between True and False Doctrine"<sup>6</sup> and his "Disputation of the Divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."<sup>7</sup>

In this volume we also find the first trace of an attempt at consolidation of Anabaptist believers into one cohesive group, soon to be known as *Doopsgezinden*, those inclined to baptism or *Baptists*. The derivation of the word *Doopsgezinde* may be from *gezind*, "inclined to," or from *gezindte*, an association of believers on a fixed doctrinal basis. In the latter case adult baptism would be such a basis. The former derivation seems, however, more likely correct, inasmuch as the Anabaptists never formed a *gezindte* in the true sense.

<sup>1</sup> *Het Offer des Heeren.*

<sup>2</sup> *Een Liedboekken.*

<sup>3</sup> *Die Slotel van het Secreet des Nachtsmaels.*

<sup>4</sup> *Die Ordinantie Gods.*

<sup>5</sup> *Verclaringhe van de Genangen ende Vrien Wil.*

<sup>6</sup> *Underscheit tusschen Rechte Leer unde Valsche Leer.*

<sup>7</sup> *Disputation van der Godtheit des Vaders, des Soens ende des H. Geistes.*

The seventh volume is rich in historical writings of the reformatory period, by which many a mystery is cleared up and a better sense of proportion is given us than we had before. The writings in this volume are mostly from the hands of opponents of the Anabaptists. But, as Doctor Cramer says, in his introduction: "The fact that they were written by opponents does not diminish their historical value. The judgments pronounced may be one-sided, but the writers were evidently well informed." And in weighing this testimony, we should remember that it was given by one who was one of the foremost leaders of the present-day Dutch Mennonites.

The copy of Alenson's *Critique*,<sup>8</sup> here reprinted, so far as known, was the only one in existence. Here we find the *Successio Anabaptistica*<sup>9</sup> and Carel van Ghent's "Beginning and Progress"<sup>10</sup> invaluable contributions to the knowledge of contemporaneous Anabaptism. Also the strangely moving "Confession"<sup>11</sup> of Obbe Philips, one of the first leaders of the Dutch Anabaptists, who parted from them in sorrow. Here also we find the "Interpolations,"<sup>12</sup> by Gerardus Nicolai, in Henry Bullinger's great book against the Anabaptists, printed in 1531 and reedited thirty years later. Carel van Ghent's work, although his title to the authorship is not wholly clear, is of the utmost value to the historian. It tells the story of the early schisms among the Dutch Anabaptists and has been used as a source by all later writers on the subject.

The tenth volume is invaluable because it reprints all the known writings of Derck Philips, who, next to Menno

<sup>8</sup> *Tegenbericht*.

<sup>9</sup> Latin title, with Dutch text.

<sup>10</sup> *Beghinsel ende Voortganck*.

<sup>11</sup> *Bekentenisse Obbe Philipsz*.

<sup>12</sup> *Inlasschingen*.



Simons, was the greatest leader of the Dutch Anabaptists. The *Bibliotheca* does not reprint the works of Menno, because they were issued in the seventeenth century, in one large octavo volume, under the title "Opera Omnia M. S."

By bringing to light all these rare and practically lost Anabaptistica, many things are made clear that were nebulous before; many things, in dispute, now may be considered settled; and many things in the history of the Non-conformists in England, so closely allied with the Anabaptist movement, are explained and cleared up. The whole field of the Dutch Anabaptist history has been lifted from the realm of the obscure and debatable into that of clear understanding and appreciation.

Also many things, in the later development of the history of Protestantism in general, are found to be evidently related to or ultimately explainable by the Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century. Their influence has been manifestly underrated and carries infinitely farther than is generally supposed.

I have definitely limited myself, in this study, very largely to Dutch and German works, besides the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*. For the Münster tragedy I have largely relied on Dr. Ludwig Keller's *Geschichte der Wiedertäufer und ihres Reiches in Münster*. Being archivarius at Münster, the author had access to documents of the rarest value. I have also utilized the works of Cornelius, Hast, and Tumbült, but especially the moving recital of the events at Münster, 1534-1535, by Heinrich Dorpius, an eye-witness of these horrors, reprinted in 1847 by Friedrich Merschmann.

A number of rare treasures were kindly loaned me by the magnificent library of the Baptist Theological Seminary, at Louisville, Ky. Chief among these are: "The

Story of the Anabaptist Riots,"<sup>13</sup> by Lambertus Hortensius, 1694; "The Life and Activities of Menno Simons,"<sup>14</sup> by A. M. Cramer, 1837, the father of one of the editors of the *Bibliotheca*; "Present Condition of the Doopsgezinden, or Mennonites, in the United Netherlands,"<sup>15</sup> by Frederick Rues; and "A More Extended Treatment of the History of the Mennonites,"<sup>16</sup> by Hermannus Schyn, 1744.

## 2. *Pre-Reformation Currents in Holland*

In the introduction to the *Bibliotheca*, the editors tell us that their aim is "to afford building material, on a large scale, to the students of history." What is here reprinted, a dozen years ago, was scarcely known at all. It was scattered in public and private libraries, sometimes kept under lock and key and practically inaccessible. "It seems desirable [they say] to remove these bars and to collect what now lies scattered, in the four quarters of the wind. All who are interested must have easy access to these monuments of the past. The more searchers study and compare them and bring them in contact with what is known from other sources, the better."<sup>17</sup> How true these words are. Building material indeed!

The Dutch Reformation did not spring full-grown into the arena, any more than the German or Swiss or French or that of any other country. The dawn precedes the day in great human events, as well as in nature. And as many rills form a stream, a great many tendencies in pre-Reformation times seem to herald the coming event.

<sup>13</sup> *Verhael van de Oproeren der Wederdoopers.*

<sup>14</sup> *Het leven en de verrigtingen van Menno Simons.*

<sup>15</sup> *Tegenwoordige Staet der Doopsgezinden, in de Vereenigde Nederlanden.*

<sup>16</sup> *Uitvoeriger Verhandeling van de Geschiedenissen der Mennoniten.*

<sup>17</sup> Introduction, B. R. N.

Heresy was in the air. Even the professors at Louvain, famed for its orthodoxy, and later on one of the fulcrums of the Inquisition, from which Erasmus was compelled to flee, through a feeling of growing uneasiness, at this earlier date were not altogether free from the suspicion of heresy.<sup>18</sup> This indicates how wide-spread was the feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction with existing conditions, in the days immediately preceding the Reformation.

The sale of indulgences was the spark which exploded the magazine of the revolt, but of the real inwardness of these sales we know but little in an authentic way. We know that Tetzel had some private instructions printed for the personal use of the preachers of indulgences. But here in the *Bibliotheca* we find the reprint of a document of the earliest days of the Reformation, containing certain rules for this sale, from the hand of no less a personage than that of Pope Adrian VI, dated 1515, and here printed for the first time. It was intended to regulate a special sale of indulgences, which for three years was to have precedence over every other, and its proceeds were intended to finance the needed repairs to the dikes or levees, those ramparts of Dutch safety. No one was to escape the net. A fixed tariff settles the price each is to pay, from the highest to the lowest. Even abbots and cathedral priests are not allowed to go free; and the scale varies between twenty-five Rhenish guilders, for the highest class, to six stivers for the lowest.<sup>19</sup> One third of the proceeds was for the pope, the rest went into the treasury of the levee work. The document is a curious one and throws some light on prevailing conditions, in the Netherlands, at this time. How earnestly Adrian,

<sup>18</sup> B. R. N., III, 27, 33, 35, 102, 107, 108, 109, etc.

<sup>19</sup> B. R. N., IX, 535-547.

then archbishop of Utrecht, warns against the competition of other indulgence-sales during these three years! Such sales were then a very common matter and constituted a serious tax on the purses of the people. People are warned not to ridicule this sale or to jeer at it. That, then, must have been a not uncommon experience for these sales and their promoters. The clergy is admonished to preach on this sale, as the American pulpit was exhorted to promote the sale of Liberty bonds. What infinite care is taken lest the money fall into the wrong hands. The archbishop evidently knew his clergy! The money is to be placed in a locked box, from which nothing may be taken either by a commissary or subcommissary or father confessor on any pretext whatever. The pope is to have his full third; all the rest absolutely goes to the dikes.<sup>20</sup> A strange world to live in! If Adrian, as an archbishop, was the same man he was in the papal chair, these conditions were kept to the letter. But we cannot wonder that such a parody on salvation and things like it created antagonisms, which inevitably must lead to a revolt like the Reformation.

The Brethren of the Common Life occupy a conspicuous place among the pioneers of the Dutch Reformation. How Erasmus hated and lampooned them, although in their schools he had laid the foundations for his later marvelous success as a Humanist. They were semi-monastic, and, generally speaking, loyal to Rome. But even among them ran a rill of heresy. For in the documents, reprinted in the *Bibliotheca*, we find proof that they furnished their quota of martyrs.

In the *Disputationes contra Lutheranos*, by Jacob van Hoogstraten, the bitter inquisitor, we are informed that, in 1526, two brethren of the fraterhouse, at Amersfoort,

<sup>20</sup> B. R. N., IX, 542.

were handed over to the civil magistrate for execution.<sup>21</sup>

Another strong pre-Reformation force, pointing to the coming event, was found in the so-called "Chambers of the Rhetoricians."<sup>22</sup> A sample of their work is found in the *Bibliotheca*.<sup>23</sup> Doctor Pyper calls it "a heresy-process on the stage," and such it is without a question of a doubt. The play is founded on Acts, chapters 3-5. What a parody on prevailing conditions! How thinly veiled is the bitterness of the attack on the Church, her priesthood, her morals, and her heresy-hunting. The stage was set up in the market-place. It was a Punch-and-Judy performance on a large scale, only the puppets were living men and women. Crowds of people attended the performances, for these plays were very popular. It was in these meetings that the fuel was stacked up for the coming conflagration. And it was in this rough school of acting that John of Leyden first conceived the ideas later embodied in the Münster tragedy. Not rarely these performances cost the cities which permitted them dearly. It is said that a production of a play of the Rhetorical Chamber at Ghent was responsible for the terrible chastisement which Charles V administered to his native city, in 1540. A contemporaneous writer says, "These plays have cost several thousand people their lives, for therein, for the first time, the Word of God was opened in these regions."<sup>24</sup>

Several distinct pre-Reformation currents are indicated in bits of literature that have come down to us. Some of this literature is reprinted in the *Bibliotheca*.

We find a tract there, entitled "The Fall of the Romish Church,"<sup>25</sup> which, from internal proofs, Doctor Pyper

<sup>21</sup> B. R. N., III, 620.

<sup>23</sup> B. R. N., I, 273 p. p.

<sup>22</sup> *Rederykerskamers*.

<sup>24</sup> B. R. N., I, 277.

<sup>25</sup> *Den Val der Roomscher Kercke*.

argues is an English origin. There seems to be no valid reason to doubt his conclusion. It is a bitterly keen polemic. There is nothing like it in the literature of the period. The man who wrote it was evidently deeply embittered against Rome and must have suffered much at her hands. He paints the ecclesiastical picture in heavy colors. Every line of that book in its day must have been like vitriol to the wounded Romish consciousness. Arguments, ridicule, sarcasm, and sneers appear in turn, and at times there is in it a sound of hellish laughter. The priests are unmercifully castigated, their hatred of the Bible is bitterly lampooned, their moral character ruthlessly assailed. One shudders at the state of mind which produced such a book.<sup>26</sup>

But there were other currents than this of undermining the authority of Rome by violent assaults. One of these is described by Doctor Pyper as that of "the modern devotion," expressing the feelings of the Dutch mystics of the sixteenth century. The existence of such a tendency was wholly unknown to the students of the Dutch Reformation, till it was miraculously discovered on April 12, 1896, at the breaking down of an old church-tower, at Boskoop, in the Netherlands. Five books were there found, immured in a small hollow place in the wall, twelve meters above the ground, where they had lain hidden for three centuries. Three of these books were dated 1566; one, 1554; another possibly, 1540. They were all books that had been placed on the *Index*. Did a mason place them there for fear of detection, hoping later to get them again?

One of these was the rare book "Of the Faith,"<sup>27</sup> whose author occupies a middle ground between the

<sup>26</sup> B. R. N., I, 395.

<sup>27</sup> *Van den Ghelooue*.



Catholic and Protestant Churches, and exhibits the mystical tendency, above indicated.<sup>28</sup>

Hendrik Roll, in his "Key to the Secret of the Supper,"<sup>29</sup> exhibits another of these tendencies. Doctor Cramer has clearly established the authorship of this work in a masterly introduction.

This man Roll was, together with Rottman, the spiritual leader of the original Münster Reformation, before it was dominated by the Anabaptists under John of Leyden. A converted Roman Catholic priest, he ultimately died a martyr's death, in September, 1534. Doctor Cramer places the date of this book between 1531 and 1533. If the book really be Roll's, we have here a product of the earliest sober Anabaptist tendencies in the Lowlands, as different from the ideas of the later Hoffmanites as the day is different from the night. In the Supper he finds "a commemoration of our joyful redemption from sin, death, and hell, granted us by God." The external ceremony is only an occasion or opportunity to express the feeling within. The spirit and the heart must eat and not the mouth only.<sup>30</sup>

To this category of writings belong also "The Refutation of the Salve Regina"<sup>31</sup> against Mary-worship, presumably written in Dutch by an unknown author; Pupper van Goch's *De Libertate Christiana* (of which only two copies are known to remain) which attacks the Roman Catholic system of faith to its deepest foundations; the "Layman's Guide"<sup>32</sup> of Joannes Anastasius; and finally "The Gospel of the Poor,"<sup>33</sup> by Cornelis Cooltuyn.

<sup>28</sup> B. R. N., IV, 524-592.

<sup>29</sup> *Die Slotel van het Seccret des Nachtmæls.*

<sup>30</sup> B. R. N., V, 23.

<sup>31</sup> *De Refutacy van't Salve Regina.*

<sup>32</sup> *Leeken Wechwyser.*

<sup>33</sup> *Dat Euangeli der Armen.*

Every one of these rare volumes is found among the reprints in the *Bibliotheca*.

How great was the unrest in the Church is plain from the fact that numerous priests, in the Dutch Church, were preaching against the old doctrine and advocating the new; men like Veluanus, mentioned above, Angelus Merula, Cornelis van der Heyden, and others, all of them in priestly orders, yet boldly attempting to spread the new faith through their preaching. Some of them sided with the Lutherans, some with the first faint beginning of the Calvinistic propaganda. Veluanus bitterly opposed the nascent Anabaptist tendency, whose leaders he accuses of cowardice and selfishness, in "that they do not themselves stand before kings and princes, as did the prophets and apostles, but they lead their disciples miserably to death and usually remain free themselves."<sup>34</sup>

The entire literature of the pre-Reformation period evidences the wide-spread unrest which prevailed everywhere.

Even in the very presence of the young emperor, Charles V, the finger of scorn was pointed at Rome. In an address from the German nobility to the newly crowned emperor, in 1519, Jacobus Sabius informed him of the true state of things and of the unsafe condition of affairs. Said he, "The only aim of Pope Julius II is to enrich the Church of Rome, by injustice, by the sword, by killing in battle, and by the destruction of believing Christians." The insatiable rapacity of the papacy is held up to scorn, as is the needless humiliation of the emperor who, when in the presence of his holiness, is compelled to act as an equerry by holding his stirrup; whilst the unspeakable nepotism of the Curia is depicted in flaming terms.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> B. R. N., IV, 333.

<sup>35</sup> B. R. N., IX, 519 p.

But it was no easy matter for really devout people to break away from the old faith and the old customs, and many a heart-break was thus occasioned.

Micronius, in his book "On the Supper of Christ and of the Mass,"<sup>36</sup> tells a touching story. Says he:<sup>37</sup>

And when the Christian prince Eduardus VI, king of England, purified his Church of the Romish idolatry, according to the command of God, it happened that a man of the royal commissioners desired that they would not expell all images from the churches of his parochy, but that they would leave them an image of Mary, or at least a crucifix, before which he was accustomed to pray. The man being asked, if it happened that the aforesaid images were taken away, what then? answered, Then I would pour out my prayers before the sacrament. But, they said, If that also were taken away, what would you do then? I would, he answered, then be compelled with my heart to call upon God in heaven.

It is true the Reformation arose in part from social and economic conditions, but beneath and beyond these lay a spiritual hunger and unrest, which bespeaks itself in all the religious literature of the period. Doctor Pyper says correctly of the reprints of all these hoary documents, "What is here produced by noble-minded leaders contains both the justification and explanation of the revolution, which partisanship only can consider as being caused by wilfulness or sinful passion."<sup>38</sup>

The dawn of the Reformation nowhere revealed itself more clearly than in the Lowlands. People everywhere were searching for the light and were longing for the coming of the expected thing, though they knew not the way or the form of its coming. The soil lay fallow for the sower, and in that soil, after the Lutheran reformatory

<sup>36</sup> *Van het Nachtmæl Christi en van de Misse.*

<sup>37</sup> B. R. N., I, 485.

<sup>38</sup> B. R. N., X, 3.

wave had passed over the Netherlands and had broken itself into spume on the rocks of a furious persecution, the Anabaptists sowed their seed, from which they reaped an unexpectedly rich harvest.

### 3. *Were the Dutch Anabaptists Waldenses?*

An interesting question, but one not easily answered.

The theory of the Waldensian origin of the Dutch Anabaptists is of late origin. There is not a trace of it in the early Anabaptist writings. Its beginnings hide themselves in those dreary days, when the rebellious Anabaptists and the peaceful Baptists (*Dooptgezinden*) were identified by all men. How many hundreds, aye thousands, of true children of God were hounded to their death, because everywhere and by all men they were believed to be one with those detestable and deluded people, who figured in the Münster tragedy!

It was only when there arose a sharp antagonism against this persistent identification, that the theory of their Waldensian origin was born. Nor was it a hopeless misfit. The Waldenses had been scattered all over Europe, and their descendants lay hidden in the Romish Church.

In the main, that faith was singularly like that of the reorganized Anabaptists. No regular priesthood, great simplicity of worship, no bearing of arms, no oath, but simple affirmation, separation between Church and State, and rebaptism of those who joined them from the old Church. These are the characteristics that are mentioned by all who favor the Waldensian descent of the Anabaptists. Two things, however, are forgotten here. The first is that, after all, there was a marked difference in regard to baptism. True enough, the Waldensians rebaptized all who came to them from Rome, but they also maintained

infant baptism; and baptism was the cardinal article of faith in Anabaptist doctrine, that is to say, adult baptism, based on the confessed faith of the candidate. Moreover, they had entirely different ideas as to the place of women in the church. The Anabaptists did not suffer a woman to speak in their meetings, nor had they a vote in the election of elders and deacons. Of the Waldensians we are told, "They teach that every layman and even a woman must preach."<sup>39</sup> At least as Luther knew them and befriended them, they largely differed from the Anabaptists of his day, to whom he was bitterly opposed.

And in the second place this similarity of views and practise applies quite generally to all the medieval sectaries. We find them among the Arnoldists, the Petrobrusians, the Catharistic sects, etc.

Similar causes apparently everywhere led to similar effects. From which men like Doctor Benedict, in his remarkable history of the Baptists, have argued to an apostolic succession of sectarian life in the Roman Catholic Church, dating back to the apostolic age. That view now has been quite generally abandoned, and the Baptists of the world proudly point back to 1641 as the year in which their history began, as a denomination, based on adult baptism by immersion, on a declaration of personal faith in Christ.

Ypey and Dermout, in their history of the State Church of Holland, strongly express their faith in the Waldensian origin of the Mennonites.<sup>40</sup> But here they only follow Schyn's argument, far more fully and laboriously extended than theirs.<sup>41</sup> Tileman Jans Van Bracht, in his "Mirror of the Mennonite Martyrs,"<sup>42</sup> tells us explicitly,

<sup>39</sup> Robertson, Eccl. Res., 462, quoting an old Italian historian, *Discunt quod omnis laicus et etiam femina debeat prædicare.*

<sup>40</sup> *Gesch. der H. K.*, I, 137, Note (101).

<sup>41</sup> *Uitvoeriger Verh.*, 2-50.

<sup>42</sup> *Martelaarsspiegel der Doopsgezinden.*

"It will be well for us to remember that the martyrs, whom we will consider, were of the profession of the Waldenses." <sup>43</sup> Rues, a German, who in the seventeenth century came to Holland to study the Mennonites, evidently follows the lead of the day, <sup>44</sup> and also identifies the objects of his research with the Waldenses. Otius has the same opinion in his *Annales Anabaptistici*. <sup>45</sup> Van Huyzen, a Mennonite preacher of note, joins all these witnesses. <sup>46</sup>

But all this testimony belongs to one period, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The shudder of Münster was still in the air, and men did not apprehend that two wholly dissimilar stems might spring from the same root. As the distance from Münster grows, men begin to have larger and broader views, and the theory of the Waldensian origin of the Anabaptists begins to lose its grip.

Dr. A. M. Cramer, who wrote an informing life of Menno Simons, and especially his illustrious son, Dr. S. Cramer, have greater critical insight and a better adjusted historical balance, and they find a lack of connecting points. Here, as so often elsewhere, *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* is a dangerous historical expedient.

Dr. A. M. Cramer discusses the early Anabaptist martyrdoms of 1527, and says: <sup>47</sup>

It may be that there were Waldensian sentiments among the Roman Catholics in Holland, but no real Waldenses. At least I do not find that shortly before or in the times of the Reformation, traces of them occur in this country.

The martyrs never even under torture mention the name, nor is the question ever asked. And Menno

<sup>43</sup> I, 395. <sup>44</sup> *Teg. Staet*, 2 p.

<sup>45</sup> *Ann. Anab.*, 3, 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Hist. Verhandelng*, 33.

<sup>47</sup> *Lev. en Verr.*, 11.



Simons himself thought that the special views which he advanced, overclouded since the days of the apostles, only recently had come to light again.<sup>48</sup>

Says Dr. A. M. Cramer: <sup>49</sup>

The sources of information are very insufficient. We know practically nothing with certainty of the existence and extent of the Waldenses at the time of the Reformation. The two lines seem to run into one, but the very center, where they ought to touch, is invisible.

He then reminds us of the milder views of the Waldenses in regard to the ban, and that they had retained quite a remnant of Roman Catholicism. They believed in the distinction between common and perfect Christians; some of them revered Mary, and they baptized children as well as adults.

And yet, even for this accomplished scholar, the subject holds a certain fascination. For after he has proved its improbability, he quotes the statement of Van Bracht that Hans Koch, Leonard Meister, Michael Sattler, and Leonard Keizer were all descendants of the Waldenses and known as such. And they were one and all Anabaptist martyrs. All this we have to accept on the unsupported testimony of Van Bracht, for in their trials not a word is said of the matter. And even if his testimony were reliable, nothing is gained, for the men mentioned were not the only or chief leaders of the Swiss Anabaptists, from which the Dutch Anabaptists in the main derived their existence.

Dr. A. M. Cramer concludes therefore that "they descended from the Waldenses, but were not identical with them. They received their origin from them, but further they developed independently."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *M. S. Werken*, 443.

<sup>49</sup> *Lev. en Verr.*, 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Lev. en Verr.*, 22.

There is not a scintilla of proof for the whole Waldensian theory. The Dutch Anabaptists were but a scattered small band before 1531, when the fanaticism of the Münster spirit began to spread like wild-fire. And in this large and sudden accession to their numbers, the foundations were laid for the reformatory and organizing efforts of Menno Simons, after 1535, when the Anabaptists were like sheep without a shepherd.

The statement of Schyn <sup>51</sup>—"For one finds scarcely a country in which this communion (*Gesindte*) is not found. These men at the beginning of the Reformation have started to reassemble their remnants, scattered everywhere, of which some have accepted Menno Simons as their teacher and minister"—is wholly gratuitous and incompatible with historical facts. The tie between Menno and the founders of the Münster party cannot be broken. Through the Philips brothers, he owed his baptism and ordination to John Matthysz, the "prophet Enoch" of Münster. Menno openly recognizes in some of the Münster party his "dear brethren," and with that party he was indissolubly linked up. But by the grace of God, he made of the Anabaptists (*Wederdoopers*) Baptists (*Dooptgezinden*), and he changed the lion into a lamb.

Says Dr. S. Cramer: <sup>52</sup>

One often meets the statement that the origin of the Anabaptists, among other things, has to be explained as the aftermath of the devotees of the fifteenth century and even of the earlier mystics. This explanation is more or less feasible. But I would like to have a single proof of its correctness, a single clear trace of this connection, e. g., the name of a "devotee" author or writing, which is quoted by one of the earliest Anabaptists.

<sup>51</sup> *Gesch. der Menn.*, 7.

<sup>52</sup> B. R. N., V, 36.



We will therefore set the theory aside and proceed on the supposition that the Dutch Anabaptists have a German-Swiss origin.

### 4. *General Social Conditions*

Feudalism had received its death-blow during the Crusades. Under it there were only three classes in society, the king and nobles, the clergy, and the serfs. During this period free cities began to rise everywhere, especially in the Lowlands. They stood under the immediate protection of the sovereign, from whom they derived their liberty and privileges. Thus a fourth estate, the bourgeoisie, was lifting its head. The burghers were mostly interested in trade and manufacture, and the manufacturing interests everywhere were strongly linked together by guilds, which clamored for and obtained recognition in the government of the cities. But on every hand the craftsman and the trader were met by the unfair excise laws of the realm. Taxes were unevenly distributed. The nobility and the clergy, even the wealthy manufacturing interests of the monastic orders were tax-free, and the regular or secular producer was thus placed in an unfavorable position. The inevitable result was an ever-growing distrust of the Church and her authority, among the middle class. Compulsory sales of indulgences and grinding taxes burdened the people beyond endurance. So cruel were the exactions and oppressions of the Church in the matter of marriage, baptism, burial, the first appearance in the church of lying-in women, etc., that Charles V was compelled, in 1528, to repeat the special warnings issued by Pope Callixtus III in 1426, and to issue a decree by which a definite tariff was set up, which no priests dare to exceed, on pain of severe fines and punishment. In the preamble, the emperor definitely con-

nects these abuses with "the disorders which have arisen and are still regnant in some places."<sup>53</sup>

Celibacy was everywhere openly affronted. Erasmus, the Philips brothers, and perhaps Menno Simons himself were all sons of priests. The testimony of Lagarde, in his "Latin Church in the Middle Ages" (Ch. XI), in regard to the hopeless failure of the decree of celibacy, especially as regards the North of Europe, is fully corroborated by that of Anastasius Veluanus, in his "Layman's Guide." In harsh, un pitying terms he castigates the clergy of his day for their gross immorality, and points to a married clergy as the only way of escape from an intolerably hideous situation.<sup>54</sup>

The respect for the Church and her institutions was fast waning. As early as 1329, the citizens of Frankfort-on-the-Oder had rebelled against the Church, because they wanted to remain loyal to Margrave Louis, who had incurred her wrath. Of course they were put under the ban, but they scorned it. For twenty-eight years they lived without mass, baptism, marriage-ceremony, or funeral rites. And when the baffled ecclesiastics finally voluntarily returned, they were met with jeers and laughter, as if the whole thing had been a comedy or farce.<sup>55</sup>

The horrors of the iconoclastic disturbances in Flanders and Holland, in the second half of the sixteenth century, could never have arisen, unless the reverence of the common people for the Church and her power had been hopelessly undermined.

The intelligence of the masses was slowly awakened. The invention of the printing-press had given an irresistible impetus to this awakening. Every one wanted to learn to read, and how eagerly these studies were pursued

<sup>53</sup> B. R. N., IX, 571 p.

<sup>55</sup> M. d'Aub., "Hist. Ref.," I, 79.

<sup>54</sup> B. R. N., IV, 252.

is abundantly proved by the turbid stream of books which, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, was pouring from the presses. It made the Revival of Letters possible and the Reformation inevitable. And what was the attitude of the Church to it?

It was deeply felt that the printing-press was really responsible for the marvelous spread of the new heresy. And who can doubt the truth of the contention?

Thus this consciousness is bitterly lampooned, in one of the documents in the *Bibliotheca*. It is entitled *Conciliabulum Theologistarum*. At this supposed meeting, all the opponents of the Reformation are present, and Van Hoogstraten, the notorious inquisitor, presides. Says the latter, "What do you think of these new poets and of their novelties, which now, through the impressory art, yea a devilish art, are printed?"<sup>56</sup> How close the lampoonist hit to the mark appears from the true words of the same man, "that he desired the institution of a book-censure, and that he would not hesitate wholly to crush the development of Humanism."<sup>57</sup> All the opponents of the Reformation have recognized the intimate connection between the invention of the printing-press and the new movement. They considered the *ars impressoria* in very deed as an *ars diabolica*, an invention of the devil, for this peculiar crisis.

They took Van Hoogstraten's advice and created an *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, under the operation of which all forbidden books were weeded out with sedulous care. How successful, or nearly successful they were, these ten volumes of the *Bibliotheca* mutely witness.

But the social conditions, prevailing before and at the

<sup>56</sup> B. R. N., III, 386. *Quid vobis videtur de illis novis poetis et de illis novitatibus, quae jam per artem impressoriam, imo diabolicam, imprimantur.*

<sup>57</sup> B. R. N., III, 388.

time of the Reformation, pressed hardest on the peasant class, the so-called *serfs*. Says Vedder: <sup>58</sup>

The peasants were in most desperate case. The recent sharp advances in prices and the consequent increase in their rents and the growing exactions of their lords had made their condition intolerable. They felt most keenly of all the economic crisis, through which the nation was passing; the pressure of which was the real, though ill apprehended, cause of the revolt against Rome.

I would rather consider the sufferings of the peasant class as a contributory cause of the revolt than as its "real" cause. As has been said before, the literature of the period forbids us to consider it as such. But the condition of this stratum of society was deeply deplorable, ground as they were under the heels of their masters and drained of the last coppers they possessed, by the greed of the Church.

Up to the middle of the fifteenth century, their condition was tolerable. They were fairly well housed and fairly well clad. They had a commons for their cattle, hogs, and sheep. The forest was open to them for wind-falls and for mast for their swine. Their treatment was considerate, and they paid reasonably, and always in kind, for their master's support. Then came the change from the Salic to the Roman law. The first was the outgrowth of the national life; the latter a foreign importation, welcomed by the nobility and the clergy for what it promised, hated by the common people for what it threatened. And then the storm soon broke.

The commons were taken from the people by the nobles, the forests were closed against them, the "small hunt" and the "small fishery" were forbidden, under

<sup>58</sup> "The Reformation in Germany," 235.

heavy penalties; their taxes henceforth must be paid in money, of which they had practically none. They were bitterly impoverished and, at the time of the Reformation, their condition had become well-nigh insupportable. "The Layman's Guide" (*Leeken Wechwyser*), in talking about fasts, has this to say:<sup>59</sup>

The third way of fasting, pleasing to God, is to be patient and contented with such food as God pleases to give us, to be jealous of no one's abundance, and never to murmur against God's will, because no richer food is given us. In such a way it is that the whole existence of poor peasants and of laborers in the cities is a noble, holy fasting, to which no fasting of monks or Beguines can be compared.

But soon the rumbling of the coming storm was heard in the distance. As early as 1502 a conspiracy was made against the bishop of Spire. The last despairing hold of these poor suffering underlings of society was the Mother of God. A secret society was formed in Germany, called the *Liga Salutaria*, whose password was "Mary." In Baden and Wurtemberg a peasant association was formed, called *Der Arme Conrad*.<sup>60</sup> In the Rhenish provinces, the peasants, in 1502, formed a *League of the Shoes*, whose standard was a peasant's shoe on a pole. They swore in the future to pay no taxes but such as they had freely consented to, to abolish all tolls and lordly duties on wine sold at retail (*jelage*), and to limit the power of the Church.

On such a horizon the weird figure appears of Thomas Münzer, and these conditions explain his momentary success. From these inflamed masses the ranks were fed of the fanatics of Münster; the radical Anabaptists, whose tragic doings we will study in the next lecture.

<sup>59</sup> B. R. N., V, 303.

<sup>60</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 1.

Can we wonder at it all?

As inevitable as fate, as sure as the force of gravity, was the chain of events, which from the peasant unrest led to the Peasant War and to the fatal days of 1535.

### 5. *The Münzer Revolution*

In 1521, when Luther was on his "Patmos," suddenly the "Zwickau fanaticism" appeared in Wittenberg. The churches were stripped of their ornaments, infant baptism was rejected, nunneries and monasteries were opened and the occupants dispersed, and radicalism was rampant in Luther's city. Carlstadt, Luther's colleague and friend, was completely swept off his feet, and even Melanchthon was affected by the clamorings of the fanatics. Only Luther's sudden return saved the day at Wittenberg.

One of the chief leaders of the Zwickau fanatics was Thomas Münzer, and not a few historians have found the origin of the Anabaptist movement in the teachings of this man. That he influenced a part of the early Anabaptists cannot be denied; that he tried to place himself and his views in touch with the Swiss Anabaptist leaders is undeniable; that he failed to do so is certain; that the last flickerings of his red torch died out in the Münster melodrama is sure. But the cradle of the Anabaptist movement did not stand at Zwickau, thank God; its origin was Swiss, not German.

A strange man was Thomas Münzer, a man of parts, but also of lack of balance. Moderns would classify him as a paranoiac. He was a man of education, a fiery, emotional, enthusiastic preacher. He may have been the anonymous author of a rare little work, found in the *Bibliotheca*, entitled "Of the Old and the New God."<sup>61</sup> He exhibited a profoundly mystical tendency when he

<sup>61</sup> *Van den olden ende nieuwen God.*



was priest at Zwickau, a people's man in the fullest sense, and the special favorite of the cloth-weavers guild. The bitter controversy between him and his colleague, Joh. Sylvanus, led to the exile of both. His own removal was hastened by an insurrection of the weavers, mentioned above, for which he may have been responsible. He denied it, but during his pastorate he had encouraged the so-called "prophesyings" of laymen. In this circle, the antagonism against infant baptism and the doctrine of Anabaptism arose, in 1521, against which Münster originally protested. The little volume, mentioned above, if Münster be its author, which Doctor Pyper strongly surmises, gives us a clear idea of his views. The Scriptures are to be realistically interpreted. He justifies revolution against a government which refuses to promote the preaching of the gospel. In this tract we find all the fundamental ideas of the Münster radicals. It must have been known and widely read by them. As late as 1572 we find its title on the Index.<sup>62</sup> Münster's influence was specially felt at Alstedt, Eisleben, Mansfeld, Sangerhausen, Frankenhausen, Querfurt, Halle, Aschersleben, Nordhausen, and Mühlhausen, where he died by the sword in 1525. The signature beneath his epistles indicates his character—"Thomas Münster, with the hammer," or "Thomas Münster, with the sword of Gideon."

Take sentiments like these, taken at random from his letters: "When they (the lords) are against the word of God, let them kill them, without mercy"; "good days agree with them, the sweat of the laborers tastes sweet to them, but it will become bitter gall. No hesitation or sham-fight will help, . . . people are hungry, they will and must eat." And then that terrible letter to the miners

<sup>62</sup> B. R. N., I, 33.

at Mansfeld, a pure piece of Bolshevism of the sixteenth century. Then it wore religion for a mask, as now it wears atheism. But the face behind both is the same. Listen :

All Germany is awake, the master wants to make a spectacle of it, the miscreants must perish. . . Where there are but three of you, who believe in God and seek only his name and glory, you will not be afraid of a hundred thousand. Now at them, at them, at them (*dran, dran, dran*), it is time. [These words, *dran, dran, dran*, are repeated again and again, they sound like a tocsin, like the stroke of fate.] Do not consider the misery of the godless; they will beseech you so kindly, they will sob and weep like children, but have no pity on them, as God has commanded Moses. . . You must *dran, dran, dran*, it is time. Let not your sword grow cold of blood, beat pinkepank on the Nimrod of Ambo, throw down his tower. . . *Dran, dran, dran*, while you have your day. God goes before you, follow him.

Do we wonder at the horrors of the Peasant War or at those of Münster? They were hatched in this crazy brain. Fortunately for Germany, his head fell, under the executioner's axe, on the bloody field on Frankenhausen, May 15, 1525.

## 6. *The Swiss Anabaptists*

From the beginning there was among the Anabaptists a left wing and a right wing, a conservative and a radical party. In 1527, Michael Sattler warned his people against "some, who prided themselves on inspiration." Three years later, in 1530, Erasmus wrote about

Anabaptist people, of whom they say that there are many in their company, who have been converted from the most wicked to the best life; and even if some of their opinions are foolishly erroneous, yet they never stormed cities and churches, nor have they conspired against the government, nor driven any one from his land or possessions.



Here he evidently distinguished between such Anabaptists as formed the Münster party and others of the sect of a milder type, although both parties were identified by his contemporaries. Only after the reorganizing labors of Menno Simons, the name Baptist (*Dooopsgezinde*) appears as distinct from the generic name of the entire movement, Anabaptists, although their opponents never used the first name, only the second.

The revolutionaries, alluded to by Erasmus, were undoubtedly the followers of Münzer, or the Zwickau leaders in general, who prided themselves on an inner light, rejected infant baptism, and preached a millennial kingdom of Christ, in which believers would rule the world, lead an idyllic life, and enjoy social equality and communistic wealth.

Melanchthon originally was deeply impressed by these fanatics and, for months, entertained Marc Stübner in his home, and, at his suggestion, the elector promised these "prophets" free exercise of their religion, provided they kept from violence. As we have seen, Carlstadt was swept away completely and was lost to the Reformation.

Protestant historians therefore usually date the Anabaptist movement from 1521, although Franck tells us that Münzer, whilst he rejected infant baptism, never rebaptized.<sup>63</sup>

Luther himself was originally against restrictive measures. As late as 1524 he wrote, "the office of the word should not be hindered";<sup>64</sup> but a few weeks later he advised the nobles to "slay and kill," when the revolution was sweeping Germany. And the patient Melanchthon, in 1531, had so completely changed his attitude that he declared the new movement to be "a devilish sect, against

<sup>63</sup> Chronicles, III, fol. 188.

<sup>64</sup> Letter to the elector, August 24, 1524. *Man möge den Ambt des Wortes nicht wehren.*

whose leaders the sharpest punishments should be administered.”<sup>65</sup>

The Swiss Anabaptist movement stands entirely outside this cycle. It had for its leaders men like Balthasar Hüb-  
mayer, chief of all in influence, learning, and standing; Conrad Grebel, whom Zwingli called “the coryphæus” of the movement,<sup>66</sup> regarded by his opponents as the most dangerous of all, the son of a Zürich patrician and councilor; Melchior Rinck, Johannes Hut, Johannes Denk, Lüdwig Hätzer, Felix Manz, Wilhelm Röublin, Johannes Brödlin, and Georg von Chur, surnamed “Blaurock.” All of these had considerable standing in their communities, the majority were men in orders, and all of them had what the Germans call *Bildung*.

Hüb-  
mayer had studied at Freiburg and Ingolstadt and was a disciple of John Eck, the great opponent of Luther. Eck was his promoter when he received his doctorate of theology. In 1515, he was professor and preacher at Ingolstadt; in 1521, he was priest in the cathedral at Regensburg, and later we find him at Waldshutt, then in Austrian territory. In the first period of his ministry he was intensely Catholic in his views, a Jew-baiter and a devout worshiper of Mary. At Waldshutt he was still an ardent churchman, but he was beginning to read Paul’s epistles and the works of Luther. In this period he visited Erasmus at Basel. In 1523 he met Zwingli at Zürich. Even then the two differed on the subject of baptism, but not to the breaking-point. He was now fast turning away from Rome and participated in the religious debate of Zürich, October 26-28, 1523. Returning to Waldshutt, he began to preach reformatory doctrines, and

<sup>65</sup> *Eine teuflische Secte, und gegen ihre Führer müsse man die schärfsten Strafe zur Anwendung bringen.*

<sup>66</sup> Newman, “Hist. of Antiped.,” 129.

wrote his "Eighteen Decisive Reasons"<sup>67</sup> to explain his position. Nothing points as yet to his later Anabaptist views. He touches on justification by faith, good works, the mass, images, the invocation of saints, the true ministry, celibacy, etc. The tract is dated 1524. But toward the close of the year his views on baptism had settled into a decided antipedobaptist tendency. He fully agreed on this subject with Grebel and Manz, and, with them, in January, 1525, held a public debate with Zwingli on this subject. Consequently the magistrates of Zürich decided to enforce the Church laws in regard to infant baptism. Grebel and Manz were ordered to cease their agitation; Wilhelm Röublin, the priest of Wyttikon, was banished and Hübmayr was bundled off to his pastorate at Waldshutt. But the trouble was not so easily settled.

On the contrary, the opponents of Zwingli passed the Rubicon, and in a private house at Zollikon, near Zürich, on February 7, 1525, Manz created a new church, by instituting believer's baptism by sprinkling. Hübmayr was baptized by Röublin a few weeks later. And now began the last brief period of his life, as an active propagandist for Anabaptism, which led to his martyrdom.

Conrad Grebel belonged to the highest social stratum of the city, he was educated at Paris and brightly intellectual. Felix Manz was also a scion of the patrician families of the city, had studied at Basel, specialized in Hebrew, and was, with Grebel, teaching in the Academy of Zürich. Wilhelm Röublin was a successful priest, thoroughly educated, and gifted as a popular orator. He preached at St. Albans, in 1521, and later was priest at Wyttikon, near Zürich. He was an advanced reformer and was openly married as early as 1523. In a public procession, he carried a finely bound Bible instead of the

<sup>67</sup> *Achtien Sluitreden*, B. R. N., I, 121.

*Venerabile*, crying out to the people, "Behold, this is your *Venerabile*, this is the true sanctuary, all the rest is but dust and ashes."

Michael Sattler became a leader of the Swiss Anabaptists, after Manz and Grebel had died a martyr's death. He also was a man of parts, well educated, and was a monk of the monastery of St. Peter's, in the Black Forest. Joining the ranks of the Anabaptists, he labored zealously for the cause in Strassburg, on the upper Rhine and in Hussia.

Such were some of the leaders of the Swiss Anabaptist movement. They baptized by affusion. Dr. De Hoop Scheffer quotes the *Sabbata* of J. Kessler, in stating their practise: "There (at Zollikon) was prepared water and, if any one desired rebaptism, they pour a dish of water on his head in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." The only exception he had been able to find was that of Wolfgang Holiman,

who on the way to Schaffhausen, met Conrad Grebel and, through him, came to so profound a recognition of the need of rebaptism, that he declined to be simply aspersed with a dishful of water, but was, wholly naked and bare, immersed and covered in the Rhine outside, by Grebel.

All this is quoted from the *Sabbata*. De Hoop Scheffer suggests that this was on the principle of Peter's cry, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."<sup>68</sup>

The general mode of administering baptism was that known and practised in Switzerland at that time.

Meanwhile the struggle between Zwingli and the bold dissenters waxed hot. The ideals of the new movement were wholly foreign to the plans and hopes of Zwingli.

<sup>68</sup> *Overzicht der Geschiedenis*, 140, 141.

He wanted to form a strong Protestant State Church; they demanded a Church absolutely free from the State. He wanted to reform the old; they wanted to build something wholly new. He tolerated all who had been members of the old Church; they wanted a Church of believers only. A compromise between views so manifestly dissimilar was from the start impossible.

But they were free from revolution. Grebel could freely write from his prison in 1524, that it would never be found that he had ever raised rebellion, or had taught or spoken anything, which could lead to it.<sup>69</sup> Yes, he had corresponded with Münzer, but this is what he had written to him:<sup>70</sup>

The brother of Harüsen writes that thou hast preached against the princes, that they ought to be attacked with the fist. Is this true? Or if thou desirest to instigate war, I admonish thee to abstain from it and to respect the property of all now and hereafter.

Meanwhile the Anabaptists were steadily increasing in numbers and power. All efforts to bring them peacefully back to the fold of the Zwinglian Church failed; they were well versed in the Scriptures, exceedingly strict in their lives, and rigorous in their church discipline; and yet they must be brought back in peace, if possible, otherwise by persecution. And thus was written that dark page in the history of Protestantism, which records the treatment of the Anabaptists at the hands of their brethren in Switzerland and elsewhere. It makes sad and dreary reading for us, who live centuries away from those opinionated days and who have a broader outlook.

<sup>69</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 28.

<sup>70</sup> Idem, 29: *Des Harüsen Bruder schreibt du habest wider die Fürsten gepredigt, dass man sie mit der Faust angreifen solle. Ist es wahr? Oder so du Krieg schüren wollest, so ermahne ich dich, wollest davon abstecken und aller Gut achten jetzt und hernach.*

By 1525, the Anabaptist movement had become a menace. But a year before, in February, 1524, the magistrates of Zürich had already begun to arrest Anabaptists, among whom were Grebel and Manz. Then followed punitive edicts, a fine of a silver mark for rebaptizing or being rebaptized, and exile for those who did so in the future. All in vain!

As the pressure from without grew, the Anabaptist faith expanded; they now added to it the policy of non-resistance, the doctrine that no Christian could be a magistrate or office-holder under the government, and they forbade the oath.<sup>71</sup>

The arrests increased, the council of the city showed its hand more plainly, as the masses of the people everywhere seemed to be swayed by the perfervid oratory of the Anabaptist preachers. It was openly said, "In three years the Anabaptists will have the majority in the city." The persecution now began to increase in vehemence, as it was seen that it was a war to the death between two diametrically different faiths. By a new edict every one was ordered to attend his parish church, and all were forbidden to harbor or entertain any Anabaptist or to give them either bed or board. The effect was negligible.

The council, now fully aroused, arrested Georg von Chur and turned their attention to Manz, who was in prison. An example must be made, and Manz was chosen as the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the whole party. To the amazement of all, the judges condemned Manz to death. Here is his sentence,<sup>72</sup> and strange reading it makes nearly four hundred years later:

Because he has baptized, against Christian regulations; because it was found impossible to bring him back from it, through any

<sup>71</sup> Idem, 29.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, 34.



instruction or admonition; because he has planned to seek yet others, who accepted Christ, believe in him and follow him, and to unite himself with some by baptism, allowing the others to remain in their faith; because he and his followers have thereby separated themselves from the Christian congregation and have riotously joined themselves together, as a schism, and are trying to organize themselves as a self-made sect, under the appearance and cover of a Christian congregation; because he has rejected capital punishment and has prided himself on sure revelations from the epistles of the apostle Paul, for the sake of a larger following; because such doctrines are injurious to the general custom of Christendom and lead to scandal, tumult, and rebellion against the government, to the disturbance of the universal peace, brotherly love, and civic unanimity, and to all manner of evil.

Therefore Manz shall be handed over to the executioner, who will bind his hands, place him in a skiff, bring him to the lower Hüttli, move his bound hands over his knees, and push a stick between his knees and elbows, and will thus bound, cast him into the water, and let him die and corrupt in the water, and that thus he shall have satisfied justice and right. And his goods will be confiscated by my lords.

And this terrible sentence was executed, to the everlasting shame of Zürich and of Zwingli, who might have stopped it, January 5, 1527, whilst Manz on his way to death was singing, *In manus tuas, domine, commendo spiritum meum*. The carnival of death now began.

Jacob Grebel, the father of Conrad, who had interceded for the Anabaptists, though not one himself, was beheaded. His son Conrad, weakened by imprisonment and crushed by his father's shameful death, now cheated the executioner, by dying in prison.<sup>73</sup>

And yet notwithstanding the growing bitterness of the persecution, the Anabaptist movement continued to spread and to gain in volume. Falk and Reiman followed Manz to a watery grave.

<sup>73</sup> Idem, 38.

By an edict of March 7, 1526, the government of Zürich decreed that "every one who baptized another would be drowned without mercy."

It sounds like an echo of the cynical motto, ascribed to Zwingli, by numerous historians, *Qui iterum mergit, mergatur*.

The rider attached to this law reminds us of the days of the Inquisition: "All those, who have recanted from the Anabaptist faith, and then fall back or give any succor to their former friends, are condemned to the same death by drowning."

The diet of Spire, in 1529, made the extirpation of the Anabaptists the duty of the empire, involving Catholics and Protestants alike. No trial was even necessary before a spiritual judge. The mere fact that one was an Anabaptist was in itself a death-warrant.<sup>74</sup> In the Tyrol and Görz, by 1531, the number of martyrs exceeded one thousand; Sebastian Franck, a year earlier, mentions double the number. They were like sheep before the slaughterer. But the persecutions were unable to destroy them. In 1562, when Henry Bullinger reedited his great work against the Anabaptists, written thirty years before, they were yet strong enough, even in Zürich, to compel such an effort, and he admits that their influence was then felt, even in the council of the city.<sup>75</sup>

But they were like sheep without a shepherd, after that first fiery persecution.

The following touching letter <sup>76</sup> was written by Hut or Hutter to some nobleman who had befriended them. Appreciating the fidelity and capacity of these people as laborers in their fields, they had given them shelter and work:

<sup>74</sup> Kurtz, "Ch. Hist.," II, 389.

<sup>75</sup> B. R. N., VII, 269.

<sup>76</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 46, 47.



We have told you, they say, by word of mouth and now tell you again in writing that we have forsaken all manner of godless life and have consecrated ourselves unto the Lord, to live according to his divine will and to keep his commandments. And for that reason we are persecuted and robbed of all our goods. Therefore the prince of darkness has caused that terrible tyrant, Ferdinand, that enemy of the divine truth, mercilessly to murder many of us, to rob us of our possessions, and to drive us from home and garden and farm. But now we have come to the land of Mähre and have lived here for a while, and last of all under the marshal. We do not burden any man and have sustained ourselves by hard labor, of which all must bear us witness. But now the marshal has caused us to be driven from our homes again with violence, and we are here in the wilderness, among the wild heather, under the clear sky. . . Woe and woe again to all, who without any reason, only on account of the divine truth, scatter us! God will require the innocent blood at their hands. . . God, in heaven, grant to show us where we shall go. We cannot permit ourselves to be forbidden the earth, for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. And when God shows us where to go or whether to stay here, we will follow his will.

This letter cost Hutter his life, for Ferdinand caused him to be apprehended, and his body to be burned at the stake at Innsbruck, in 1535, after he had been killed in an attempt to escape from prison. Thus his little flock was left behind. But they had been strongly organized, after a purely communistic type, which greatly reminds us of the later Shakers. Only during the second half of the century they obtained toleration, but they stood forever apart from the other Anabaptists, and called themselves "Hutterites" after their founder.

Hübmayr died a martyr, by fire, at Vienna, March 30, 1528. A year before Michael Sattler had passed away, on May 21, 1527. After the death of Manz and Grebel he had become the true leader of the Swiss Anabaptists. His death was specially soul-harrowing. The farewell

letter to his congregation, written from the prison-tower at Bintzдорp, breathes even now a benediction upon us. Who can doubt the deep piety of this man? How tenderly he admonishes his people to fight the good fight of faith to the end; how he agonizes for their spiritual well-being; with what tenderness he commits to them his "true sister," his wife, if he be sacrificed unto the Lord! He closes with these words: "I wait on my God; pray without ceasing for all captives; God be with you all; Amen."

His martyrdom, under an imperial sentence, was diabolically cruel. Of what was he accused? Listen:

1. He and his followers have acted against the decrees of the emperor.

2. He has denied that the sacrament is the true body and blood of Christ.

3. He rejects infant baptism.

4. Also the validity of the sacrament of oil, the sacrament of the dying.

5. He has despised and rejected the Mother of God and the Saints.

6. He rejects the oath.

7. He has introduced a new and unheard-of way of administering the Supper, putting the bread and wine in one plate.

8. He left holy orders and married a wife.

9. He professed unwillingness to war against the Turks and, if war were right, he would rather fight Christians than Turks.

Sattler admitted all these accusations—how puerile they seem to us as we scan the list today—only, as to the last point, he remarked that those who persecuted the children of God were worse than Turks, "seeing they were Turks after the spirit."

The sentence against Sattler was a frightful one, even for that day:

Between the governor K. M. and M. S. it has been deemed just that M. S. shall be handed over to the sheriff, who shall take him to the market-place and cut out his tongue. Thereupon he shall be cast on a cart and, then and there, the sheriff shall twice tear his body with a red-hot pincers, and thereafter, as he is brought before the gate, in the same way five times.

This being done [says the chronicle] he was burnt to ashes as a heretic, his brethren were decapitated, the sisters drowned. But his wife, after much praying, admonition, and threatening, was also drowned, in great constancy, not many days after.<sup>77</sup>

Thus died the man who, more than any other of the Swiss Anabaptists, has influenced the subsequent history of the Dutch Mennonites.

All the prominent leaders of the Swiss Anabaptists had now been cut off by the persecution. Manz and Grebel were gone, Simon Stumpf was exiled, Ludwig Hätzer had been beheaded at Kostnitz in 1529; Hübmayer and Sattler and Denck had all gone to their reward.

The prospects of the Anabaptists in Switzerland and Austria were literally stamped out in blood; the sheep were without a shepherd, and hundreds of them preferred exile and a foreign home to the hopeless memories of the past and the dreary outlook for the future.

Can we wonder that, in this night of gloom, the star of chiliastic expectations began to twinkle; that what little of Münzerism had found lodgment in the hearts of the Anabaptists should now assert itself in a violent reaction against the unbearable conditions under which they lived? By 1530, the fate of the upper-German Anabaptists was settled. Torn asunder, scattered, all but annihilated, the surviving brethren led a pitiable life. In re-

<sup>77</sup> B. R. N., V, 650.

mote corners, under the shadows of the forest and in the dead of night, the survivors met in sad conventicles and, in sorrowful commemoration, kept alive the names of those who had died for the common cause. Keller's picture of these conditions is very vivid.<sup>78</sup>

From the highlands of Central Europe the waters run down in every direction, and, like these waters, the Anabaptists spread, from this common center, to all European lands. But the great bulk of the exiles came down the Rhine and the Rhone and found refuge in the remote lands of Northern Europe and especially in Northern Germany and the Lowlands

### 7. *The Dawn of Anabaptism in Holland and its Swift Spread*

Traces of Anabaptists had been observed there, long before the Swiss impulse was felt. Zichenis wrote, in 1523, and it is evident from his *Sacramentorum Brevis Elucidatio* that by that time the Anabaptist propaganda was well known in the Netherlands, or at least that the ideas, which became fundamental in their faith, were well known.<sup>79</sup>

But now the shores of the North German ocean and of the Baltic became the veritable breeding-grounds of the Anabaptist movement. The people grew with amazing rapidity. It seemed as if the lands of the North had been waiting for their coming. Especially the mass of the common people "heard their doctrine gladly."

They grew to be specially numerous in Frisia, Groningen, East Frisia, Gelderland, Holland, and Brabant. But the entire shore of the Baltic, as far as Livonia, soon knew them; and they found special harborage in cities like

<sup>78</sup> *Geschichte der Wiedertäufer*, 47.

<sup>79</sup> B. R. N., III, 295 p.

Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, etc.

They were practically everywhere recognized as desirable citizens; quiet, industrious, obedient, thrifty, and God-fearing—and yet they were hated. The fever of Münzerism touched only a comparatively small faction of them, and the bulk of the Anabaptists were not responsible for the excesses of the few. And yet, strange to say, the thought of discriminating between them seems never to have entered the mind of their opponents. The rare volume, “Brotherly Union,”<sup>80</sup> is perhaps the first serious effort ever made to weld the mass of these believers in a common faith, into one homogeneous whole. Of this old volume only one copy is known to exist. It treats of seven articles, which had been adopted by the Baden Anabaptists, and were now sent by the brethren who had attended the convention there, to all fellow believers as a circular letter. These articles touch baptism, the ban, the Supper, the ministry, the sword, the oath, etc.<sup>81</sup> The date is probably between 1550 and 1560. But the fundamental facts go much further back, for Sattler died in 1527, and as Sattler had written down these principles, and as they became the constitutional foundation of the Sattler group of Anabaptist churches, we find here perhaps the oldest printed Anabaptist documents.

Zwingli knew them and fought them in his *In Catabaptistarum Strophas Elenchus*. Calvin had studied them, because in 1544 he discussed them, in detail, in his *Contre les Erreurs des Anabaptistes*. Dr. S. Cramer is right in calling the tract “the fullest, most upright, and most attractive self-confession of the original South-German Anabaptists.”<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *Broederlicke Vereeniginge*.

<sup>81</sup> B. R. N., V, 603.

<sup>82</sup> B. R. N., V, 585.

It is unquestionable that even before the Münster tragedy the conservatives were far stronger among the Anabaptists than the radicals.

But, as has been said, everywhere the good were identified with the bad and, through the example of Switzerland and Germany, both were considered one with the followers of Thomas Münzer, and thus they shared in a common persecution and denunciation.

### 8. *They Were Universally Hated*

Blaupot ten Cate tells us, "About the year 1534 suddenly the placards against the Lutherans, formerly threatened, are replaced by those against the Anabaptists."<sup>83</sup> A common name was given to all preachers of the sect—*Rotgeesten* ("Riotous spirits"). For the tragedy of Münster was now staged, every eye was turned to that doomed city, and the universal hatred against the Anabaptists, of whatever type, was accentuated. "The anathema of the ban, pronounced in Holland against antagonists of priestly privileges before the Inquisition, came with sterner measures."<sup>84</sup> Everywhere voices were raised against the hated sect, and such of them as were exiles from Switzerland and Germany might well say, "One woe is passed away, and lo, another cometh." The persecution in Holland lasted from 1530 till 1580, Carel van Ghent tells us. It actually ceased with the "Pacification of Ghent," November 8, 1576, but sporadic cases of martyrdom occurred close up to the time mentioned by the author. Thus Reytse Ayssens was burned at the stake at Leeuwarden, in 1574.<sup>85</sup> And of all the countless sacrifices demanded by the bigotry of Rome and Spain of

<sup>83</sup> *Gesch. der Doopsgez. in Vriesland*, 49.

<sup>84</sup> Motley, "Dutch Republic," I, 69.

<sup>85</sup> B. R. N., VII, 521.



the restless Netherlands, the ratio of Anabaptist losses to that of other Protestant bodies was ten to one.<sup>86</sup>

But the bitterest thing of all was that the hatred of their fellow martyrs was not a whit less vehement than that of the Roman Catholics. Surely it makes humiliating reading, when we scan the lines, burning with antagonism and hatred, in which the Protestant contemporaries of these early Dutch Anabaptists pour vitriol in the wounds of these humble followers of Christ. "By their fruits ye shall know them." What are we to think of Luther, who attributes the marvelous courage and patience ascribed to these martyrs to "diabolical possession"?

Fabritius, the great Reformed preacher, captured by treachery, awaits his sentence at Antwerp, and a friend, writing him an encouraging letter, uses this argument:<sup>87</sup>

When you see that nowadays the poor Anabaptists, in great droves, with all confidence, suffer many and various oppressions, exiles, imprisonment, torture-chambers, fire, sword, water, and many other ways of death, and this all—what a pity—for ugly and slanderous errors.

No one pities them, as they do the other martyrs; they stand alone, forsaken of all men in their misery.

Guido de Bres, author of the "Belgic confession" and the most celebrated martyr of the Spanish Inquisition, who died by hanging at Valenciennes in 1567, called the Anabaptists "the tares in the wheat." Two years before his death he wrote a book against them,<sup>88</sup> in which he called them "a pest for the Netherlands" and bitterly traduced them in every way.<sup>89</sup> Compelled to admit that many Anabaptists were truly godly men, he falls back on the maxim "Doctrine goes before life."

<sup>86</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 88.

<sup>87</sup> B. R. N., VIII, 430.

<sup>88</sup> *La racine, source et fondement des Anabaptistes*. B. R. N., VII, 467.

<sup>89</sup> B. R. N., VIII, 487.

When the stress of the persecution had risen to the breaking-point and when, afraid of the ominous rumblings in every direction, which presaged a coming storm, Margaret and her advisers had devised a plan of moderation, the Anabaptists were specifically excluded from its operation.<sup>90</sup> In the inhuman placards of the day, the Anabaptists, one and all, were declared to be outlaws. Those who were captured and repented, if men, were to be beheaded; if women, drowned or buried alive. All their teachers and all unrepenting captives were burnt at the stake.

Two things, in the main, constituted the indictment against them: they were indiscriminately accused of rebelliousness, and they rejected infant baptism. The latter, in view of the age-long doctrine of the Church of Rome anent the absolute necessity of baptism to secure the salvation of the child, must have appeared little less than child-murder to their contemporaries.

An echo of this state of mind comes to us from the Strassburg Disputation,<sup>91</sup> in which we read:

We wish that Hoffman would assign a cause for his raving against infant baptism and prove its justice, since he has caused many hundreds of his brethren to be strangled on account of it, who were executed in many lands.

Luther says of the Anabaptists, "These wretches can be held under neither by fire nor sword. They leave wife, child, home, farm, and all they have." Melancthon, once in sympathy with the Zwickau prophets, said, "One need not pity the Anabaptists, although one sees them die steadfastly for their faith, for they are hardened by Satan." And Calvin and Zwingli were not a whit behind in their

<sup>90</sup> *Y. en D., Gesch. der H. K.*, 1, 181.

<sup>91</sup> *B. R. N.*, V, 304.



harsh condemnation of the hated sect. All the Protestant leaders of the day but swell the chorus of condemnation. Nowhere a word of pity or sympathy, everywhere this crass and utter rejection of all their claims and pleas.

In the fullest sense they were the outcasts, the Ishmaels of their day.

### 9. *Constant Touch with England*

During all this period large numbers of Anabaptists were continually shifting between the European mainland and England.

Whenever the pressure of the persecution rose beyond the endurance-point on the Continent, and whenever conditions in England seemed more favorable, they flocked in large numbers to the great island kingdom, their last hope and sanctuary.

Economic conditions in England always offered a ready market for labor, and thus laborers were always welcome. And as the Anabaptists, taught by bitter experience elsewhere, generally were content to hide their identity, were frugal and industrious, and proved acceptable in the various—mostly humble—spheres, where they sought admittance, they were generally well received and universally kindly treated. Thus there was a great influx of Anabaptists in England during the whole reformatory period.

Large numbers came in 1528, and the flow continued uninterruptedly till by 1573 it was estimated that there were fifty thousand of them in the country. They naturally congregated in certain fixed centers. Their strongholds were found in London, Norwich, Dover, Romeney, Sandwich, Canterbury, Colchester, Hastings, etc. Many of the earlier Anabaptist refugees were Hoffmanites, later they were prevailing of the Mennonite type.

"Every record of these people, during the sixteenth century, indicates that they were foreigners, chiefly Dutch, who made little if any impression on the people of England, who were the last of any people to adopt antipedobaptist sentiments."<sup>92</sup> But only a small portion of these thousands of immigrants ever repatriated themselves. The great bulk of them were amalgamated with the English nation, and became a leaven for the subsequent non-conformist movement in the English Church. Of this point I will treat more fully hereafter.

The laws of the land were as bitter against them as those of the Continent; their only safety consisted therefore in lying hidden. Wherever they asserted themselves and revealed their identity or showed any disposition to thrust their peculiar views upon their environment, they were in as mortal danger in England as in Holland.

The fact that the trials of Anabaptists in England are practically negligible in number pleads for the theory of a quiet, restrained life on their part in England, till the middle of the eighteenth century, when they had liberty to exercise their religion as well as the other non-conformist bodies; or on the other hand, that of a quite general absorption of them by their environment.

It appears that Doctor Vedder is not quite justified in the assumption that "the decline of the persecution on the continent caused their numbers to dwindle till they disappeared."

Too many traces of them are left in the non-conformist life of England to accept this theory. They came to England in vast numbers, they remained there in large numbers; and they set their stamp as indelibly on the land that gave them sanctuary as they did on the land of their birth.

<sup>92</sup> Newman, "Hist. of Antiped.," 345, 346.

## II

### THE RADICAL ANABAPTISTS

Two currents, as we have seen, flowed side by side in the Anabaptist movement; it developed on parallel lines: to the right, the conservative current; to the left, the radical.

Doctor Vedder calls the Anabaptist efforts "the radical Reformation." And in a way this is true of the entire development, but it is true, in a special sense of that part of it which we will consider in the present lecture.

In order that we may obtain a bird's-eye view of this radicalism, it is best to group it under two heads; the first is its theological aspect; the second, its economic and social development.

#### I. THEOLOGICAL RADICALISM

Here several names immediately suggest themselves, more or less familiar to the church historian—Melchior Hoffman, David Joris, Hendrick Niklaes, Adam Pastor, Sebastian Franck, and John Matthysz; the last, a man of opinions less than a man of acts but, as the connecting-link between Hoffman and Münster, indispensable in this galaxy of worthies.

##### 1. *Melchior Hoffman*

As we have seen, the Anabaptists spread themselves over all Europe, from the highlands of Central Europe where they had originated. But the mightiest current flowed toward the North.

In Württemberg, Baden, the Palatinate, Hessa, and Thuringia, they were soon so numerous that they constituted a popular movement. Here even in the Middle Ages, groups and associations had formed themselves, which turned their backs on all dogmatic and ceremonial ecclesiasticism. The Reformation embodied this spirit, and from these circles soon accessions came to the Anabaptist movement.<sup>1</sup>

But here also it met with a crushing opposition. Always north the current therefore sped, till it crossed even the ocean waves and washed the shores of England.

In Holland the Anabaptists found the soil prepared for the reception of the seed, for Lutheranism had made an appeal to the national spirit and somehow had failed. What pleased the Germans could not please the Hollanders. They are of a radically different psychological type. There is far more spiritual kinship between the Scotchman and the Hollander than between the latter and the German. Lutheranism never obtained a strong hold on the Dutch mind. And what there had been of it in the Lowlands had been practically stamped out by the heel of persecution.

Moreover when the Anabaptist movement swept over Holland, Calvinism had not yet appeared in sufficient strength to make a deep impression.

Let us therefore beware of underestimating the initial success of Anabaptism in this part of Europe. It came almost with the shock of a spiritual impact. It spread like wild-fire among the masses of the people, in every direction, but it held a special fascination for the inhabitants of the Northern provinces. Not that its powerful influence was not felt in the Southern provinces as well; but it seemed as if the Anabaptist current, rushing northward, had reached the ocean and recoiling upon itself

<sup>1</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 54.

had subsided at last in the spot where further progress was a physical impossibility.

And of this impact, of this tremendous initial success, Melchior Hoffman was the leader. A. Brons calls him "the father of the Dutch Baptists"<sup>2</sup> (*Dooftgeezinden*), and justly so.

In distinction from the Swiss Anabaptist leaders, Melchior Hoffman was a man of the people, a craftsman, by trade a furrier, wholly an autodidact; whose library consisted of one book, the Bible, and whose schooling was of the most meager kind.

Originally closely attached to Luther, he soon drifted away from Wittenberg with all its influences, and, in his wanderings, finally reached the city of Strassburg, where he joined the Anabaptists, in 1529, the same fatal year in which they were declared outlaws throughout the entire empire.

I have called attention to the fact that the reaction of these terrible days produced among a certain type of Anabaptists decidedly fanatical and chiliastic propensities. Hoffman identified himself, heart and soul, with this group; he began to study the prophecies, he received visions and began to consider these as direct divine revelations.

A man of a nervous temperament, with a fiery tongue and a burning imagination, he was soon at the very forefront of the throng of visionists, who imagined they saw, in the clouds of the distant horizon, the picture of their deliverance and glory. Christ was coming, the millennium fast approaching, the days of their warfare were almost over. Oh to be ready, with lamps trimmed and burning, when the bridegroom came!

This furrier, untaught by man, began now to create,

<sup>2</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 54.

from the Scriptures and from his hypersensitive imagination, an eschatological structure which for a few years was to cast its shadows over all Northern Europe. Strassburg was to be the "new Jerusalem," descending from God out of heaven; the two witnesses were to appear, and of these two he was the first, even "Elijah."

He now began to move restlessly, like a wandering Jew, from place to place, especially through the Netherlands and East Frisia. At Embden alone he baptized three hundred people, among whom was Jan Volkerts, surnamed *Trypmaker*, from his handicraft. This convert of Hoffman was destined indirectly to point the way to Münster. With him Hoffman traversed Holland from end to end, preaching, prophesying, baptizing everywhere. As moths are attracted by the candle, so were men and women attracted by his fiery pictures of the coming of Christ, of the destruction of the wicked, and of the glory in store for all true believers. Literally thousands were baptized by Hoffman and Trypmaker. Like the breath of the Lord in the valley of dead men's bones, the message of this fervid chiliasm passed from lip to lip and from heart to heart, and the words of the preacher burned like fire in their bones.

But as the time was short and the millennium sure to begin at Strassburg in 1533, Hoffman hied himself thither, leaving Trypmaker behind in Holland to encourage the saints. Alas, on his arrival in the city, he was apprehended, tried, convicted, and imprisoned till his death, ten years later.

His fanaticism consisted of two things: First, he preached a sudden imminent change in the course of events; and secondly, he assured himself that that which he conceived possible would certainly come to pass. He was therefore thoroughly wrapped up in himself and



utterly self-deceived.<sup>3</sup> Zur Linden denies that Hoffman was a chiliast. He tells us that he pictured to himself, in the coming revolution, some such event as had constituted former historical crises, say the period of John Huss and his revolt against existing conditions.<sup>4</sup> But if Zur Linden is correct in this judgment, why did Hoffman call himself "Elijah," one of the "two witnesses" of Revelation? In his "Ordinance of God"<sup>5</sup> lie the seeds of the revolutionary outbreaks of his followers, who, as is generally the case, were to go far beyond the master. He there reminds his readers that "those who believe will sit with Christ in his throne and will rule over the Gentiles."<sup>6</sup> Surely the harvest of the Münster tragedy lay in the teachings of this man, as any harvest lies in the seed scattered by the sower.

The whole recital of the Strassburg disputation, June 3-15, 1533, on which Hoffman was condemned to life-long imprisonment, is found in the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, all the Reformed preachers of the city being arrayed against the accused and Schwenkfeld.

The *Acta* of this meeting contain the entire *procès verbal* of all its transactions. They are a perfect word-picture of what transpired there and, though written by an opponent of Hoffman, were never seriously questioned as to their historicity or correctness. They were originally published in German, but immediately translated into Dutch, on account of the large following Hoffman had secured in the Lowlands.

In the introduction we are told by Martin Bützer, the editor, that besides the commonly accepted Anabaptist vagaries, some of these Strassburg Hoffmanites lived

<sup>3</sup> B. R. N., V, 129.

<sup>4</sup> M. H., *Ein Prophet der Wiedertäufer*, 199.

<sup>5</sup> *Ordonantie Gods*.

<sup>6</sup> B. R. N., V, 154.



very impure lives, and, when accused of it, they answered "that they did not sin in these things, for they can no longer sin, their old Adam is dead."<sup>7</sup> Strip this of all partisanship, and there is still ground to believe that the antinomian spirit, later so familiarly known among the Hoffmanites, was even then at work at Strassburg, and waited only for a more favorable environment.

The fanaticism there had risen to the boiling-point. One Leonard Joesten and his wife Ursula were said to be divinely inspired, as they prophesied. These prophecies were eagerly published by Hoffman and, in 1532, they had passed through a second edition. They are now, alas, utterly lost. If we had them, we would be able to see more clearly to what extent Hoffman was really responsible for the Münster disaster.

According to these prophecies, the light was to go forth from Strassburg, which was to enlighten the whole world. The baptism with water was offered to the whole world, but for those who had persecuted the saints there was to be a baptism of blood, etc. And Hoffman claimed that these prophecies were as valuable as those of Isaiah or Jeremiah.<sup>8</sup>

When the "disputation" was over, his case was summed up as follows by the judges:

1. He denies both the divinity and humanity of Christ.
2. He denies the prescience of God, and the doctrine of election. He impugns the plan of salvation and teaches an absolutely free will.
3. He attacks the comfort of the consciousness of the forgiveness of sin.
4. He assigns infant baptism to the devil and disrupts the communion of saints.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Intr. to Disp., B. R. N., V, 222.

<sup>8</sup> B. R. N., V, 226, Aant, 4.

<sup>9</sup> B. R. N., V, 308.

The Strassburgers evidently looked upon him as a dreadful heretic; as we see him, he was rather a vacillating and weak man. In his *Das XII Cap. des Daniels ausgelegt*, 1526, he had denied the freedom of the will, and before his death, he "recanted most of his strange ideas and said he no longer believed that the last day was near."<sup>10</sup> Evidently his spirit was broken by his long imprisonment. Trypmaker, his Dutch disciple, had already sealed his faith with his blood, December 5, 1531, at the Hague. Poor Hoffman! When he was led away to prison—and those medieval prisons were no rest-houses—

he had lifted up his hand toward heaven and swore by God, who lives there for ever and ever, that he would neither use food nor drink, but bread and water, before he had pointed his finger to Him who had sent him.

Did he keep his oath all these endless, tragic, ten years?

With his death the Strassburg Hoffmanites died out.

## 2. David Joris

David Joris was born at Delft and was ordained as an Anabaptist bishop by Obbe Philips, at Delft, either in 1535 or 1536; at least about the same time with Derck Philips and Menno Simons.<sup>11</sup> For a while he was with Hoffman at Strassburg. In 1545 he attended the disputation at Lübeck, with Menno and others, and took an active part in the discussion. He has been called "the arch-heretic" among the Anabaptists and he was always named in the same breath with Sebastian Franck. Marx van Aldegonde, the celebrated Reformed statesman and theologian, stigmatizes him as the "greatest heretic among them all."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> *Succ. Anab.*, B. R. N., VII, 45.

<sup>12</sup> B. R. N., X, 475.

His industry was marvelous, for two folios and more than a thousand tracts remain from his hand. Both Dr. A. M. Cramer<sup>13</sup> and Doctor Nippold<sup>14</sup> have shed a wonderful light on this singular character. And yet Dr. S. Cramer admits that still much about David Joris and his doctrines remains dark and uncertain.<sup>15</sup> So much is sure, that he was extremely egoistic and considered himself the "true David," the acme and final consummation of the revelation of God. Even Christ was only the shadow of the coming glory realized in him. With him all revelation reached its adult state, he ushered in the final stage of the development of the kingdom of God. V. P., the unknown author, in his *Successio Anabaptistica*, summarizes the doctrines of David Joris, as follows:<sup>16</sup>

1. All revelation, hitherto given by Moses, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, are now null and void for salvation. They were only temporary expedients, till the time of David Joris.

2. David Joris is the true Christ and Messiah.

3. Christ did not rise in the flesh, but is now reincarnated in David Joris.

4. D. J. can absolutely pardon sin, and can also damn forever; and, at the last day, he will judge the world.

5. D. J. will again raise the House of Israel and the true children of Levi, with the true tabernacle of God; not by the way of the cross and of death, like the other Christ, but with mercy, love, and grace.

Blasphemous and ridiculous claims, you say; but tell me how could one, with such claims, in a period so unsettled, and with thousands longing for any change that offered, help gaining a tremendous following?

<sup>13</sup> *Het Ned. Archief v. Kerkgesch.*

<sup>14</sup> *Zeitschrift für die Hist. Theologie.*

<sup>15</sup> B. R. N., VII, 282.

<sup>16</sup> B. R. N., VII, 48.

His bold assumption, his fiery oratory, his hysterical utterance, both in his public address and in his writings frequently bordering on absolute blasphemy, made it inevitable. For example:<sup>17</sup>

Come hither to me and listen to me. Come, ye that are athirst, to the waters of life, to the fountain of wisdom in the highest. Yea, ye that are at your wits' end, who have no money, come buy, that ye may have to eat. . . Hear, hear, ye that have the fear of the Lord, listen, listen to the voice of the trumpet. Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Rouse yourselves, more, still more, yet more, more, more! No, still more and more and still more! Look, look now, expect your God.

Sentences like these strike one like a hammer. There is an echo in it all of the style of Münzer. In all ages and among all peoples there is always a stratum of stupid admirers of the marvelous and the bizarre, who are caught in that sort of net. Who can wonder that in the restless days, in which these words were spoken or rather flung out among masses wholly estranged from the Church, whose entire religious consciousness was in a state of flux, such an appeal must have been strangely fascinating to the common people, especially those of an emotional temperament? When, later on, the Mennonites were organized, they forbade the reading of the books of David Joris to their members, on pain of the ban.<sup>18</sup> And small wonder, for Joris denied all the cardinal articles of the Christian faith. He sought the kingdom of God in this world, denying both heaven and hell. He was accused of immorality,<sup>19</sup> since he taught that the acts and words of the believer do not affect the holiness of his heart in the least. He taught that believers, in order to escape persecution, may safely take part in the

<sup>17</sup> B. R. N., VII, 378, 379.

<sup>18</sup> B. R. N., VII, 416.

<sup>19</sup> B. R. N., VII, 283, 302.

Romish ceremonies, if only they set not their heart on them. His main ideas apparently were these: First, the Scriptures, their commands and ceremonies, must not be taken literally, but must be translated into the terms of one's environment. Not the letter, but the spirit, that is the value one sets on the letter, counts—an idea which reminds us of Ritschl's *Werthurtheil*. And secondly, the believer is a changed man, drastically changed; he lives not only in a different sphere of thought, but in a really new world, he stands individually before the great question of life and salvation. No church, no theology, no dogma can help him. God lives in and with believers, in a sense they are deified. All searching after God and all philosophizing about him are unnecessary; the believer has God. Such was the theology of David Joris.

For a while he had a large following. But the Anabaptists had excommunicated him, and the Inquisition tried very hard to lay hands on him. Had he been caught, his punishment would have been exemplary. But he disappeared completely. For many years he lived unrecognized at Basel, under the assumed name of Johan van Brugge, and when he died he received a notable, almost an official funeral. Three years after his death, it was discovered whom the city had harbored so many years. His body was exhumed, a regular trial was held over it, and the poor remains, together with a large box of his books and his portrait, were burned at the stake, by the executioner, in 1556.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. *Hendrick Niklaes*

Running somewhat on parallel lines with the David-Jorists, the faction among the Anabaptists created by Hendrick Niklaes was yet distinct from them. But he

<sup>20</sup> B. R. N., VII, 274.

was of the same general type with David Joris, whose correspondent he was.

He claimed to usher in a complete state of sinlessness, of absolute perfection, when he founded the "House or Family of Love." Like David, he taught that all former revelations, imperfect as they were, now had reached their ultimate in him. The past had done its work, it was irrevocably cast aside. No more doctrine or sacraments, all these were dead, mere works of childhood; with him the period of adolescence was ushered in. Acts do not count, only what one feels and believes counts; and love is the one thing in life. Remain in the Church, if you will, or leave it, if you will, it is all the same. When the heart is right, all else is. His contemporaries accused him of shocking immorality and of teaching free love. It is certain that his teaching had a distinct antinomian tendency.

In a little book, still found in the Mennonite library at Amsterdam, published in 1546, and entitled "Of the Spiritual Land of Promise, of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and the Holy People, written by Niklaes,"<sup>21</sup> we read things like these:

Nothing unclean is to be seen in each other, it is all divine and holy and good. Because it is all God's handiwork, they are not ashamed of it, nor do they cover their members from each other. . . And thus God views the noble man in his nakedness and man also views the glorious God in his divine nakedness. And this is pleasing to God that all coverings and all protections and all middle walls of partition be removed from his handiwork, in order that God may recognize it as good, as he has made it.

Niklaes specifically defends "spiritual marriage" in his "Spiritual Law and Promise," and thus we see one of

<sup>21</sup> B. R. N., VII, Nic., *Inl.*, 304.



the modern Mormon doctrines grin at us from the gray past. Strange is it not, how little that is really new there is under the sun.<sup>22</sup>

What Niklaes teaches had been taught and practised before his day. For the "Adamites" of Hussite days had held similar views. And the Libertines who were Calvin's mortal enemies at Geneva evidently had come in touch with the House of Love. And the so-called "Naked-runners" (*Naaktloopers*) among the Anabaptist fanatics, who in this period appeared in many cities, in serious disturbances, were manifestly disciples of Niklaes. The sect was transplanted to England, where they were known as Familists, with a very unsavory reputation, and where they lay under the imputation of serious immorality.

#### 4. *Adam Pastor*

Here we meet with a man of a different stamp, radical, as were the others mentioned, but of a far more dangerous type. His original name was Roelof Martens. He was a Westphalian by birth and had been in holy orders, inasmuch as he was a converted monk or priest. Among several others he was sent out as an Anabaptist (*Doops-gesinde*) bishop by Derck Philips and Menno Simons, between 1543 and 1547—when is not exactly known. He became a strong antagonist of the David Joris party and of the "House of Love." His mind was too clear, his eye too sharp, his thoughts too profound to be deceived or attracted by such vagaries. He was unquestionably the most brilliant man and scholar in the entire Dutch Anabaptist community of his day. In him we find all the boldness, all the self-assertiveness of the later Dutch "Moderns" and a forecast of many of their doc-

<sup>22</sup> Nic., *Inlass.*, B. R. N., 304, 306.



trines. He was a born liberal and wholly unafraid to state his views. Dr. S. Cramer heralds Pastor as one "in whom we most purely meet that which gave its peculiar cachet to the 'brotherhood,' at least in our country;"<sup>23</sup> which clearly indicates the doctrinal position of the Dutch Mennonites in our day.

Adam Pastor, in his earlier ministry, had a decided leaning to the Catholic doctrine of the incarnation, which was utterly different from that of Menno Simons. Hence the indecisive disputation of Embden in 1547, where they covered this point in a lengthy debate. That debate formed a crisis in the life of Pastor; his views changed completely and he became an avowed anti-Trinitarian. After the disputation of Goch, which followed soon after that of Embden, where Pastor avowed his change of opinion and openly expressed his new views, he was deposed from the Anabaptist ministry and excommunicated by Philips and Menno. But he retained a large following and labored on the lower Rhine. His followers were named "Pastorites" and after his death were gradually absorbed by the other parties among the Anabaptists; by the Baptists (*Doopsgezinden*) to the largest extent, and by the later Socinians.

It is said that Menno Simons, when an old man, deplored his act of "banning" Pastor; at least he wrote, in 1550, whilst he deplored the fact that they had disputed about such matters as the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, "May the Lord not impute it as a sin to them, who allowed it to come to the ban."<sup>24</sup>

Surely Menno Simons banned or helped to ban many a man for far more insignificant lapses than those of Adam Pastor. The latter, however, apparently felt the

<sup>23</sup> Intr. *Underscheit*, etc., B. R. N., V, 355.

<sup>24</sup> *Een vermanende Belydinge van den drie-eenigen, eeuwigen en waren God*; M. S. Op. Omn., Amsterdam, 1681, fol. 385.

sting of this ban to the end of his life. It was a wound that never healed.

The principal writing of Pastor has been preserved for us, although only one copy, so far as known, remained when it was reprinted in the *Bibliotheca*, and from it we learn to know the exact theological opinions of the author.<sup>25</sup> Its title is "Difference between True Doctrine and False Doctrine."<sup>26</sup>

He denied the Trinity, the preexistence of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Ghost. He evinced little sympathy with Paul, whose doctrine of salvation was apparently repugnant to him. Christ, his life, his words—that is the content of his religion. He was totally averse to the Münster spirit, evidently a man of a clean life and a kindly disposition. He sided with the other Anabaptists in the rejection of infant baptism; but was against the overvaluation of adult baptism on faith.<sup>27</sup> But he condemned the position of the David-Jorists, who, although they called themselves Anabaptists, permitted infant baptism, because they had no faith in any external application of the sacrament.<sup>28</sup>

Such a man was Adam Pastor, whom we will meet again.

His influence survived for a long time, for as late as 1628, some Flemings, the "Contra-house-buyers" (*Contra-huiskoopers*)—a great name for a sect of believers—are mentioned as adherents of Arius and Adam Pastor. He unquestionably prepared the way for the reception of Socinianism in Northern Europe and inoculated Anabaptism with it. His motto evidently was *Intelligo ut credam*; what he could not understand he would not believe—pure rationalism therefore.

<sup>25</sup> B. R. N., V, 315-581.

<sup>26</sup> *Underscheit tusschen Rechte Leer unde Valsche Leer*, Dorch A. P.

<sup>27</sup> B. R. N., V, 419.

<sup>28</sup> B. R. N., V, 477.

### 5. *Sebastian Franck*

Sebastian Franck was a man of the same general type as Pastor. Dr. S. Cramer does not hesitate to rank him as one of the early independent Anabaptist leaders, whose followers were called "Franconists."<sup>29</sup> With Pastor, he bitterly opposed the Münster party, although he says, in his "Chronicles," of the same period, "I consider it true and I fully believe that many pious, simple folk have been and still are in this sect, and that many, even of the leaders, were zealous for God." The same testimony was borne by Martin Bützer, who lived and labored four years among them; and in that same spirit Menno Simons unquestionably called them "his dear brethren."

Franck was a liberal par excellence among these early Anabaptists. He rejected the Church as an institution, with her dogmas and sacraments, and taught an undogmatic, antiecclesiastical type of Christianity, entirely depending on individual convictions.<sup>30</sup> Even among the radicals he is a radical. He considers the inward testimony of the Spirit far superior to the Word of God, and utterly denies the doctrine of the Trinity, whilst he derides preaching and preachers and the sacraments. The Church of God is found everywhere; not only among Christians, but also among Jews, heathen, and Turks. Every one who fears God is our brother, even though he never heard of baptism. The ban and foot-washing seemed to him ridiculous inventions of man. No one is worthy the name of preacher, except he be called by a voice from heaven. Since, however, the entire apostolic tradition is abandoned and overturned, the Church will remain a hopeless makeshift till the end of time. And

<sup>29</sup> B. R. N., VII, 280.

<sup>30</sup> Idem.

no man has the right to gather the dispersed body of Christ, unless God specifically commissioned him to do so.<sup>31</sup> A cheerful sort of religion.

But Franck was a tireless worker. He wrote "Chronicles from the Time of Creation till 1536"; "World-book, the Mirror and Image of the Whole Earth," printed at Delft in 1583; a "Golden Ark," 1560; and a "Concordance or the Sealed Book, Closed with Seven Seals."

As late as the first half of the seventeenth century, he had many followers and admirers in Holland. Chief among these was Dirck Volkertszoon Coornhert, the author of "The Art of Living Well" (*Wellevenskunst*), a book which largely influenced the Arminian tendency in the Netherlands, in the Reformed Church. It would seem therefore as if some of Franck's ideas, through Coornhert, might have sprouted up again in that historical controversy. Nor is this a far-fetched supposition.

Dr. F. Pyper tell us :<sup>32</sup>

Coornhert criticized Philips severely. On the other hand, he is a great admirer of Franck. A number of Coornhert's writings afford evidence that he has been subjected to a large degree to his influence.

We will later meet the point of contact between these two again.

Marnix, of Aldegonde, the great statesman and friend of William of Orange, outlines the ideas of Franck after this manner :<sup>33</sup>

He teaches that the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are not the word of God, but only a shadow of the word, a manger of Christ, a monstrence, an ark, a sheath,

<sup>31</sup> B. R. N., X, 481-508.

<sup>32</sup> B. R. N., X, 475.

<sup>33</sup> Ph. M. van Aldegonde, *Wederlegginge der Geestdryvische Leere*, 182, V.

a lantern, a witness, a lost and closed book, yea death only and eternal darkness, wherewith Christ and all pious people are killed. That nothing in all the world is less to be considered the word of God than those Scriptures, if one understands them externally, as they sound after the letter, because they are an eternal allegory, that is, they have a hidden meaning, the very opposite of the literal meaning. Yea one might almost as easily give an account of Ovid's *De Arte Amandi*, a book full of terrible immorality, as of the Scriptures, if they are to be literally understood.

So much is certain that, if possible, Franck went even beyond David Joris and Adam Pastor in the liberalism of his ideas. Was I right in calling these men the leaders of the theological radicalism of the Anabaptists?

## II. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RADICALISM

As we have seen, the social condition of the common people, at the time of the Reformation, was deplorable in the extreme. In a rare little volume, written by Lambertus Hortensius, of Montfoort, rector of the Latin school of Naarden, which treats of the riots of the Anabaptists, the theory is advanced that the great controversial tract of Martin Luther on "The Freedom of the Christian Man," wrongly understood by the masses of the people, led to the socialistic disturbances, which culminated in the Münster tragedy.<sup>34</sup> This seems an extremely far-fetched explanation. For although the year of the appearance of this work of Luther, 1524, makes the conjecture historically possible, we are not to forget that Luther was not largely read, was indeed *persona non grata* in the circles where these Anabaptist disorders specially revealed themselves.

<sup>34</sup> *Verhael v. d. Oproeren*, 3.

Dutch Anabaptists heralded the Münster kingdom; they were the leaders in all the tragic developments in the episcopal city, and they attempted several coups of a like character with the Münster calamity, in several cities in the Lowlands. And in all these circles Luther was hated almost as much as the pope of Rome. This view of Hortensius may then be set aside as a mere speculation.

It was rather an echo, in the history of the development of Anabaptism, of the teachings of Thomas Münzer. The latter had proclaimed everywhere that "the common people were oppressed with heavy burdens and tolls, that they were steadily overworked and, in addition to that, could scarcely get enough food to live on, and that all wealth was in the hands of the princes."<sup>35</sup> His rebellion had been a terrible experience for Germany, and a costly lesson for the rebels; since over one hundred thousand are said to have perished in the peasant wars by which the Münzer rebellion was crushed.<sup>36</sup>

But the teachings of Münzer were not dead. They spread far and wide and mutterings were heard on every hand, in lands far removed from the seat of the peasant wars. It was a disease with a local outbreak, but which affected the whole social life of the sixteenth century. The entire proletariat was affected by this revolt, and again and again the fire broke out in widely separated places.

Now into all this inflammable material had fallen the firebrands of the fanatical, chiliastic preaching of Melchior Hoffman. Hundreds of people joined the ranks of his followers, not from deeply religious convictions, but for a change whatever it might be; for the excitement it would bring; for an outlook, vague and ill defined for the time being, but full of promise for the future, in

<sup>35</sup> *Verhael v. d. Oproeren*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Idem*, 6.



which the terrible power of oppression would be broken and the coming millennium would usher in a wholly new order of things and absolute social equality.

To these were added malignant elements among the lower orders, vultures of prey, then as now ever ready to join a movement which promised gain and an outlet for their evil passions.

Van Lennep,<sup>37</sup> Ypey and Dermout,<sup>38</sup> Fruin,<sup>39</sup> and Motley,<sup>40</sup> all pour out the vials of their historic wrath on the heads of the actors in the drama of 1534-1535.

The fate of Europe hung in the balance; what Bolshevism is today, radical Anabaptism was then. The Münster tragedy was an epoch, it was the hinge on which the future of Europe turned. Success for the Münsterites would have brought chaos to the whole continent, for Argus eyes in every city were watching the experiment. As it was, the Münster experience wrought irreparable harm to the Reformation, and thousands, who blindly identified all branches of Protestantism with those riotous Anabaptists, drew back with a sigh of relief in the embrace of the old Church, which after all seemed like a harbor of refuge in the dreadful cataclysm of human passions.

The communism practised by the Münster Anabaptists was no new thing. We have met it among the followers of Hut, the so-called "Meerlanders," the Anabaptists of Mähren, Moravian Anabaptists therefore. They were separated from the Germans for this very reason. On account of this communism, which they adopted because they read in the Scriptures that it was practised in the apostolic Church (Acts 2 : 44, 45; 4 : 34, 35; 5 : 1-10),

<sup>37</sup> *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, I, 212 p.

<sup>38</sup> *Geschiedenis der Hervormde Kerk*, I, 130, Note 97.

<sup>39</sup> *Tien Jaren uit den Tachtig-jarigen Oorlog*, 237.

<sup>40</sup> "Dutch Republic," 79.



some were burnt at the stake.<sup>41</sup> The same authority tells us that the Mähren Anabaptists had church-officers, whom they called *oeconomicos* or stewards. All the members together had a kitchen-purse (*Koecborse*), from which all drew according to their need.<sup>42</sup>

The estimate of Anabaptism by Doctor Vedder, in view of the Münster tragedy, seems amazing. Says he:<sup>43</sup>

They alone accepted in absolute good faith and followed to its necessary consequences the principle avowed by the leading reformers, that the Scriptures were the sole source of religious authority. . . They were centuries in advance of their time, in perceiving that the good news of salvation, as taught by Jesus, was a social gospel, and that the acceptance of it implied and necessitated a reconstruction of society, until all institutions could endure the measurement of the golden rule. In a word, the Anabaptists were the real reformers of the sixteenth century.

In a foot-note the author qualifies this sweeping statement and says that some of them now would be called "anarchists" and "communists."

All the radical elements, which we have studied up to this point evidently can lay no claim to the title of "real reformers of the sixteenth century"; the Münsterites assuredly do not deserve the title, and of the Anabaptists in general it is certainly untrue. The inherent faults of their whole organization forbade them from making a deep and lasting impression anywhere. A reformation, along the lines laid down by the Anabaptists, would have ended in dismal failure. Here, I think, we have a clear case of "Distance lends enchantment to the view."

The more intimately one studies the Anabaptist movement the deeper the conviction grows of its inherent weakness.

<sup>41</sup> Nic., *Inlass.*, B. R. N., VII, 467.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, 474.

<sup>43</sup> "Ref. in Germ.," 345.

However we may try to discriminate between them, prior to the Münster tragedy they were all called Anabaptists. Under that name they figure in all the documents of the *Bibliotheca*, and we gravely doubt whether Doctor Vedder's statement can stand the test of an unprejudiced historical criticism.

Keller has justly said: "The Reformation originally was largely negative. Masses of the people left Rome, but they got nothing in its stead." Luther called the condition of the Church, in 1529, "most miserable. The common people learn nothing and know nothing. They no longer attend the confession or go to the Lord's Supper, as if they were totally free from the experience of all religion."

And these conditions prevailed in the Netherlands to an alarming degree. Lutheranism had been practically killed by persecution. Calvinism had not yet made its appearance there, at least not to any extent. In the interval, the gospel of Melchior Hoffman, who had passed through the Lowlands with the swiftness of a meteoric flight, had deeply stirred the masses. His announcement of a glorious future, bright like the morning-star, set their souls afire. Trypmaker, his disciple, had taken up the task of inspiring the people, after the master's departure.

And now "Elijah" languished in prison and Trypmaker had fallen a martyr to the cause. Every eye was strained to see the signs of the times, every ear listened eagerly to catch the footfalls of the coming Redeemer. Thus the year 1533 passed away. Would Hoffman's prophecy be fulfilled and would the promised "Enoch" appear? The year was almost passed, when first in whispers, then like a clap of thunder the news was heard: "He has come, the time is at hand." Trypmaker, before his death, had dropped his mantle on the shoulders of the

man of destiny, and that man was a baker from the city of Haarlem, John Matthysz, who startled his hearers by solemnly averring that he was the expected "Enoch," and thus he began his mission of death and revolution.

He started out comparatively calmly, but soon his innate fanaticism burst out in lurid flames, as he boldly raised the cry, "Take the sword and slay, the unbelievers must be rooted out." At the start he met with some doubt and opposition, but in a little while his followers were completely hypnotized by his frenzied appeals, and soon he was the acknowledged prophet of the Dutch Anabaptists.

He was a man of unsavory reputation, but of great personal magnetism and courage. Tiring of his aging wife at Haarlem, he had hypnotized a beautiful young woman of that city, the daughter of a respectable brewer, and persuaded her to follow him to Amsterdam.<sup>44</sup> Thence he sent out apostles, whom he appointed, two by two; and it was through the twain sent into Vriesland, Bartholomew Boeckbinder and Dirk Cuyper, that the link was established between the Matthysz-Anabaptists and the party which was to be regenerated through the labors of Menno Simons. For from them Obbe Philips received his mission, which he in turn handed over to his brother Derck and Menno Simons, who were destined to become the leaders of the reformed Anabaptists.

The prophetic promise now was scattered abroad, "that God in a short time would purge the earth of all those who shed blood, all tyrants and unbelievers."<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile all eyes were turned to Münster, where the Reformation had triumphed and where great things might be expected for the fanatical Anabaptists. Among the

<sup>44</sup> *Succ. Anab.*, B. R. N., VII, 30.

<sup>45</sup> *Bek. O. Ph.*, B. R. N., VII, 129.

disciples sent out, two therefore were despatched to Münster, Gerritt Boeckbinder and John of Leyden.

### 1. *The Münster Tragedy*

John Matthysz claimed to have received a revelation that this city was destined to be the "New Jerusalem," not Strassburg, as Hoffman had prophesied. As a spark in a magazine, this news acted on the tense, hysterical mood of his adherents. "Blind masses from the Lowlands, Westphalia, and East Frisia, following their inward compulsion, began to march to Münster, there to take part in the victory of the believers."<sup>46</sup> They were promised that, if they left all, they would not lack anything, their shoes would not wear out, their clothes would be like iron, nor need they care for any sustenance; for they would be either spiritually nourished or food would be sent to them from heaven.<sup>47</sup>

The most illuminating recital of what transpired in Münster, between 1533 and 1535, which I have read, is the wonderful book of Dr. Ludwig Keller, *Geschichte der Wiedertäufer und ihres Reichs zu Münster*.<sup>48</sup> He has the more right to a candid hearing, because as State archivarius he had access to documents hopelessly beyond the reach of others. Kersenbroick's story, as that of an eye-witness, heretofore was one of the chief sources for all research work in this direction. But as he had been burgomaster of the city and one of the councilors, later on a follower of John of Leyden, and yet was only exiled after the fall of Münster, his testimony seems somewhat clouded and open to suspicion. A more reliable and astonishingly vivid story is that told by another eye-witness, Hendrich Dorpius, in 1536, reprinted from the

<sup>46</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> B. R. N., VII, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Münster, 1880.

original by Friedrich Merschman, in 1847. Among the addenda, he publishes a very informing letter of Anton Corvinus to Spalatin, a sort of report of the success of the Hessian mission, which was sent to the captive "king" to convert him, if possible. Doctor Merschman says of the story of Dorpius: "For the historian it is invaluable, as the tale of an eye-witness and from the mouths of eye-witnesses; and for one who loves to study the present by the light of the past, it shows, as in a mirror, the communism of the sixteenth century." Schlözer, I think, is correct in surmising that Dorpius was one of the twenty-eight apostles who were sent out by John of Leyden, when the siege grew bitter. It would appear to me that the sentence,<sup>49</sup> "All of them were executed in the places where they first arrived, except one, who was saved by our God," conclusively points to the author as the one saved. And that the author returned to Protestantism is plain from his words:<sup>50</sup>

Thereupon, on Friday, St. John's day, in the midst of the summer, God comes and destroys this hell and drives the devil out of it, and his mother (Mary) comes back into it. . . And on the aforesaid day, when the city was taken by the bishop, the Anabaptists were torn up by the roots, but the Papists were planted in again.

And still another document of special value is one reprinted in part in the *Bibliotheca*, only three copies of which are known to remain. Its title is "Restitution of the right and true understanding of some articles of the Christian faith, doctrine, life," etc.<sup>51</sup> It is dated 1534, during the siege of the city by the bishop therefore, and is from the hand of Rottman, who had introduced the

<sup>49</sup> *Die Wiedert. in Münster*, 23.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem*, 25.

<sup>51</sup> *Restitutie des Rechten ende waerachtigen Verstands Soomiger Articulen des Christelyken Geloofs, Leere, Levens*, etc. B. R. N., VII, 559 p.

Reformation in Münster and later, alas, was torn from his moorings by the prevailing fanaticism. It is a curious document and plainly indicates the beginnings of the hysteria which led to the Münster drama.

The Anabaptists began to arrive after he had preached there three of four years. But once won over by them, he became as wild a fanatic as any of them. In this book we are told of heavenly voices, of weird visions, of a man seen in the sky with a crown of gold and a sword in his right hand and a rod in the left; and of another man also seen in the heavens, whose hand dripped with blood. He tells us that, when they were baptized, they intended to suffer for Christ's sake, but that they had changed their mind, by the will of God. The sword now had become the symbol of vengeance, of cleansing, of the divine government in the earth.

Rottman remained in Münster to the last. But in the storm and massacre of the city he mysteriously disappeared, his body was not found, and no one ever knew what became of him. Presumably he was killed in the final assault or drowned in trying to cross the deep moat. If he escaped alive, he wisely hid himself where he never could be found. For his punishment, had he been caught alive, would have equaled, if not exceeded, that of the "king."

Keller lays down these doctrinal principles, as fundamental in the entire early Anabaptist movement:

1. The Church must go back to apostolic times.
2. She must build on the Scriptures, but on the Old Testament only in so far as it is not contradicted by the New Testament. The latter is really the basis of faith.
3. The internal revelation stands by the side of the external. The relation between these two, from the beginning of the movement, was in debate among them.



4. Religion is all, theology is of small account.

5. Faith is trust in God's mercy and obedience to his will.

6. Justification is necessary for the existence of faith, but faith without works cannot save us.

7. Heaven and hell were of small account; in their earlier days at least the Anabaptists were strongly inclined to universalism.

8. There is no original sin.

9. They denied the Trinity, either directly or by implication.

10. They had strange views concerning the incarnation.

11. Also about the Supper.

12. They were bitterly opposed to the doctrine of predestination.

13. They believed in liberty of conscience; yet among themselves they banned those who differed from the others on the slightest pretext.

14. The rejection of infant baptism and the insistence on that of adults, on profession of faith, was the fundamental creed of the entire sect.

Viewed socially and politically their ideals were subversive of all existing standards:

1. Communism prevailed in the oldest types. This was notably so among the group which took part in the Münster tragedy, but it revealed itself elsewhere as well. It was unquestionably a relic of Münzerism.

2. A true Christian needs no magistrate.

3. So long, however, as men are sinful, magistrates may be necessary and should be obeyed. This doctrine prevailed also among the Mennonites or *Dooptgezinden*.

4. A sharp social division between believers and unbelievers should be maintained.

5. No military service.



## 6. No oath under any conditions.

This is the general view of Anabaptism, as Keller saw it. We shall study the theology of the Anabaptists more in detail later on, and we shall see in how far Keller has given a true outline of their faith and views of life and society. But take this outline, as here given; sift out what is good, retain what is bad, multiply it a hundredfold, and blow on it the hottest breath of fanaticism; throw over it a cloud of crude chiliasm, and you have the foundation of the Münster tragedy.

Its story in detail would fill a volume; I can only etch it in outline, with a few strokes of the pen.

Münster had rebelled against its bishop, had thrown off the yoke of the past, and had accepted the Reformation. Bernard Rottman had become its spokesman, wholly against the will of the magistrates, but with the powerful backing of the populace. His preaching almost from the beginning betrayed a communistic and Anabaptistic cast. A small trickle of the Anabaptist sect had begun to filter into the city. On November 2, 1533, the preaching of Rottman caused a riot among the people, and three days later it was decided to exile the troublesome preacher from the city, together with all his followers. The interference of Bernard Knipperdolling, one of the burgomasters, frustrated this plan and crushed the Catholic reaction. Three parties now were formed: the Anabaptists, whose number grew day by day, the Catholics, and the Council party. The last held the city hall. A bloody conflict was narrowly averted by the compromise of November 6, under which general religious liberty was granted.

But among the Anabaptists in the city, Münzerism and the Hoffmanite chiliasm now began to work like a leaven, and a new sect of Anabaptists was born, wholly

distinct from the general body, of which it was a wild offshoot. The sentence pronounced against Hoffman at Strassburg and his incarceration seems to have fanned the chiliastic enthusiasm into a lurid flame. Bands of Anabaptists continued to arrive and a smith, Johann Schroeder, openly began to make propaganda for the new fanaticism. He was imprisoned, but immediately liberated by an angry mob, December 16. The Anabaptists now began to aspire to the mastery in the city.

On January 13, 1534, John of Leyden, with a fellow emissary of John Matthysz, Gerthom Klooster (what became of the man Boeckbinder, originally sent out with him to Münster, is not known), arrived in the city. They preached a new gospel. "The baptized and elect were henceforth, under the rule of Christ, to live a happy life, in communion of goods, without laws, without government, and without marriage."<sup>52</sup>

John of Leyden, or as his proper name is, Jan Beukelszoon van Leyden, at that time was about twenty-five years old. He was born out of wedlock of a Münster woman. A few months before, he was converted under the fiery preaching of John Matthysz, at Leyden. He was there baptized and immediately sent out as an apostle, naturally to Münster, his mother's city. He was handsome, a glib talker, an adept at theatricals, through his training in the rhetorical chambers of Holland, and, above all, he had a forehead of brass.

After familiarizing himself with the situation, he first of all succeeded in getting a proper social standing by marrying, by what hypnotic art we know not, the daughter of Knipperdolling. In an inconceivably quick time Roll, Knipperdolling, and Rottman were his willing tools. Hundreds of people were baptized by night, in secret

<sup>52</sup> Keller, *Gesch. d. Wiedert.*, 136.

Anabaptist meetings. Conditions now began to be hectic in the city. On February 9, 1534, an attempt was made to surprise the city by an armed band of shouting Anabaptists; which was suppressed with great difficulty by another compromise.

Meanwhile Anabaptists were marching on Münster from every direction. On March 21 thirty ships filled with them left Amsterdam and anchored near Genemuiden. Four days later, three thousand men, women, and children arrived in twenty-one other ships. The attempts of these hordes to join the Münster Anabaptists were bloodily repulsed by the Dutch Government and hundreds of these fanatics were ruthlessly killed. But others kept coming, and other cities of the diocese of Münster were beginning to feel the strain and taint of the fanaticism which was in the air. Only by the sternest measures, Warendorf, Soest, and Osnabrück were saved from Münster's fate. Everywhere the same symptoms, the same extravagant chiliasm, the same stealthy meetings in the dead of night and multitudinous conversions, the same projected violence.

Münster now had become a cave of Adullam. It was said in the instructions to the Keistag at Cologne: "All fugitives, exiles, and felons, within and without the see of Münster, are gathered there." The city had become the rendezvous of shady characters of every type, who, under the cloak of religion, sought to further their own nefarious ends. "All the evil passions in human life were exhibited in 'the holy kingdom of the New Jerusalem' at Münster."<sup>53</sup>

On February 24, 1534, a terrible iconoclastic wave passed over the city. The great Minster, the bishop's own church, was ruthlessly sacked; altars, images, and

<sup>53</sup> Keller, *Gesch. d. W.*, 196.

baptismal fonts were broken into fragments, the bones of the saints were desecrated; monasteries and convents were spoliated, and the invaluable library of the Minster was destroyed by fire.

Three days later the reign of terror began. An armed mob ran through the city shouting, "Out with you, ye unbelievers, God will awake and destroy you." Practically all who were not Anabaptists left the city, and their goods were immediately confiscated. All who remained and were yet unbaptized submitted to the rite, and by March 2, 1534, not an unbeliever remained in the city. The "Holy Jerusalem" had been established.

Meanwhile the prophet "Enoch," John Matthysz, had arrived in Münster and had assumed the chief leadership.

In the same week the bishop laid siege to the city, but the fanatic Anabaptists laughed him and his allies to scorn. Was not God on their side, and would not Christ soon appear, in glorious majesty, to crush and disperse their enemies?

A system of absolute communism was now introduced, all money and all valuables were deposited in a designated house, on pain of death to those who refused to obey the order. And thus the whole population of Münster was enslaved to the Anabaptist leaders. Rubert Rüscher, who had dared to laugh at all these pretensions and decrees, was shot down in cold blood by "Enoch" himself.

But the days of this second "witness" were numbered; for on the fourth of April, in an excess of fanaticism, he left the city with a handful of volunteers to disperse the besiegers, as he claimed, by divine command. He fought like a lion, but was overpowered and slain, and his poor remains were brought back into the city in a basket.

On the same day John of Leyden assumed the leader-

ship, and, at his suggestion, twelve elders were appointed to rule the people. Their power was only an apparent one, for John ruled the city with a high hand and did not tolerate much intervention from any one.

Things speedily went from bad to worse. On July 23 the institution of polygamy was solemnly announced; John of Leyden setting the example by marrying the widow or rather the mistress of his late chief. The decree was received with acclaim by the mass of the fanatics; and, in this connection, Dorpius mentions iniquities which strangely remind us of the press reports of the sexual regulations of the Russian Bolsheviki.

The better-minded remnants of the former inhabitants of the city, under the leadership of Heinrich Mollenbeke, rebelled against this condition of affairs. The party of insurgents numbered about two hundred men, and they actually succeeded in capturing John of Leyden, Knipperdolling, Rottman, and thirty other leaders of the Anabaptists; but after a desperate battle they were overpowered by numbers. The survivors were massacred to the last man.

John of Leyden now had absolute control of the entire situation. The fortune of war seemed to smile on him, and his popularity grew by leaps and bounds; and when, on August 31, 1534, the attacking forces of Bishop Frans had been decisively repulsed, Diesentschur, one of the newly appointed elders, in a hysterical address, proclaimed the kingdom of the New Jerusalem and dramatically pointed to John of Leyden as the new King David, and the latter was unanimously acclaimed as such.

The twelve elders, much to the surprise of his sponsor, were now deposed from office, and John became the autocrat of Münster, an honor for which he had long and arduously plotted. As Hoffman had claimed to be

“Elijah” and Matthysz “Enoch,” so John now arrogated to himself the proud title, “King David,” bestowed on him by a semilunatic.

I have said before that John of Leyden was a consummate actor. Hear what he has to say on the day of his election :

God has chosen me to be king of all the world. But I tell you I had rather been a swineherd or followed the plow than to be king, dear brethren and sisters. But what I do I must do, for God has chosen me for it.

John significantly retained for himself the office of chief executioner, but Knipperdolling became his stadholder, Rottman, his royal orator. Other high-sounding, but really meaningless dignities were liberally distributed among his favorites, as it pleased the king.

His highest ambition had been attained, he had become the incarnation of the chiliastic dreams of his fanatical followers.

The new kingdom was established with great pomp. An imperial crown of gold was made for “King David”; he wore a golden chain about his neck, from which a ball of gold was suspended, pierced with two swords, symbolical of world dominion. A scepter of gold, studded with jewels, was ever in his hand; and Divarra of Haarlem, John Matthysz’s widow, became the chief queen. Other queens, from eleven to seventeen, as the chroniclers say, shared her glory. On the market-place a throne was set up, and there he judged the people.

But the siege inclosed the city ever more closely; the bishop having abandoned the costly attempts to take Münster by force and now entirely depending on famine as his chief ally. Nor was he wrong in this change of policy. In the palace all was glitter and abundance and



luxury, whilst hunger and suffering slowly began to stalk about the city. Knipperdolling, perhaps resenting the humiliation of his daughter, who was John's legitimate wife, resented the new order of things, yet dared not openly rebel, though he succeeded in artfully undermining the king's authority. He finally proclaimed himself the "spiritual" as John was the "physical" king of Zion.

The last days of 1534 were the heydays of the glory of the "New Jerusalem," even though ominous clouds, portentous of evil, were hovering on the distant horizon. At a great public festival, at which John parodied the Lord's Supper, he solemnly sent out twenty-eight apostles to the neighboring cities. They succeeded in getting through the besieging army of Bishop Frans and arrived at their various destinations. But there they perished at the hands of the executioner—"all but one." That single exception, as we have seen, was undoubtedly Dorpius, who left us so vivid a narrative of the Münster tragedy.

On September 25, 1534, Elisabeth Hölschen, one of the queens, was publicly decapitated by John, for interfering with her husband, "as an example to the wives of the city." Her only fault was this, that she had called the attention of the king to the luxury of the palace, as compared with the growing destitution in the city.

The courage of the besieged, however, was unabated; they resisted the bishop heroically, made many successful sallies, and harried the enemy day and night. But all importation of food was prohibited by the close investment of the city, and day by day the scant supplies dwindled. All flour and corn were now collected and doled out in small rations to the populace. The king alone fared well, as did his court; and after the taking of



the city, plentiful supplies were found stacked up in the "palace." But hunger will not be denied, and murmurings of the people began to reach the royal ears; he resorted therefore to dreams and visions to bolster up the declining fanaticism; and one night, only half clad or as others say wholly naked, he ran through the city, shouting, "Rejoice, O Israel, thy salvation draweth nigh." Everything that ingenuity could devise was done to fan the dying embers into flame again and to turn the populace of the city from the contemplation of the inevitable. And for a while he succeeded. A strange psychology this—a whole people hypnotized by one man! There were attempts at rebellion—that was inevitable—but all such attempts were crushed out in blood. Of treason very little revealed itself till the very end, but many tried to escape from the doomed city, only to meet a worse fate at the hands of their implacable enemies. History records but few instances of a more heroic defense in the face of impossible odds. The resistance made by these untrained warriors had been magnificent. But the siege was not raised, and the famine in the city grew ever more deadly.

New emissaries were now sent out from the city, with pitiful cries for succor, some of whom escaped the encircling enemy and did their work well, as is indicated by the popular unrest, in the winter of 1534-1535, in a wide radius about Münster. Four armies were planned to raise the siege of the city, which were all to meet at designated spots in Holland. The attempts to assemble them were actually made, as the historical facts witness, but they failed of execution through the watchfulness of the Dutch government.

Finally the crisis came.

The city was betrayed by one Heinrich Grossbeck, who was attempting to escape from the inferno and was

captured, but spared on condition that he show the weak place in the defenses. He did so and actually reentered the city at the spot indicated. Another man, Hans Eck, formerly a servant of the bishop, then a deserter to "King David," now made an attempt to be reconciled with his master by betraying the city into his hands. And strange to say, he pointed out the very spot, as most vulnerable in the defenses of the city, which had been indicated by Grossbeck. The two therefore cooperated in the final surprise of Münster.

By April conditions in the city had become appalling; every living animal and every green thing in it had been devoured by the ravenous people; death only remained, either by famine or the sword.

On this doomed city the army of Bishop Frans descended, in a surprise attack, on June 25, 1535. Those who first entered the city were in imminent danger of being wholly wiped out, for the Anabaptists defended themselves with the courage of despair. But relief came in time, and after terrific street-fighting, the city was taken, and all Anabaptists caught with arms in their hands were ruthlessly killed. The whole place was literally drenched with blood. Queen Divarra and several others of the harem of "King David" were taken alive and beheaded.

John of Leyden, a coward and poltroon to the last, tried to escape from the city, but was captured, alive and wholly unwounded; so were also Knipperdolling and Krechting. All of them like cowards had left their people to their fate, thinking only of their own miserable lives. Far better had they died, arms in hand at the head of their fighting men. Rottman had disappeared as by magic and was never seen or heard of again. The city since that day has stood loyal to its ancient traditions.

The captured king was led from town to town, with a double chain about his neck, fastened to a horseman on either side, bareheaded and barefoot, for the sport of the people. He was incarcerated in a strong castle, at a little distance from Münster, called Bevern. And there he was visited by a commission of Philip of Hessa, who had supported the bishop in the siege and capture of the city, consisting of Corvinus and Kymaeus, who tried to find out the exact doctrinal position of the Münster Anabaptists and who discussed with him certain points of his belief.

The result was meager and the theology of John was negligible. And yet we learn more about the actual beliefs of the Münster fanatics from this document than perhaps from any other source.

As to the right of rebellion John of Leyden held the exact position of Thomas Münzer; any people had the right to rebel against a government which refused to obey the gospel of Christ and to rule accordingly. As to justification, he had apparently the haziest possible views himself, but he professed a willingness to accept the Lutheran view.

On one point he stood absolutely firm and that was infant baptism, which was to be utterly rejected. On the Lord's Supper he had the vaguest possible views. In regard to the incarnation he held the common Anabaptist belief that Christ had not taken his human body from Mary. And in regard to polygamy, he saw no sin in that at all, since the Bible saints had practised it.

No one can read this story of Corvinus without sensing very clearly that John of Leyden was no theologian. He had no deep, immovable foundations of any kind. He was the man of the hour, a born opportunist, egoistic and self-centered to the core, a buffoon and a harlequin

to the last. He was evidently willing to make concessions to save his life, and he promised the commission, if set free, to cause all Anabaptists to modify their Christological views. As to polygamy, he grandiosely announced that he was willing to consider it a moot point, to be held in suspense, till the whole Church had decided it to be permissible.

Poor buffoon! To the very last he evidently deluded himself with the hope of escape, than which nothing was further from the minds of his captors. All three were condemned to death for lese-majesty and insurrection; the question of heresy did not even enter into the consideration of their guilt. They were condemned simply on political grounds, which of course was inevitable on account of the mixed character of the court. They were inhumanly tortured to death, by having the flesh torn from their bodies with red-hot pincers. Yet not one of them gave a sign of pain. John said, as the torture began, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Further than that, no sound till his death. Knipperdolling is said to have prayed, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Beyond that an unbroken silence. Krechting called out twice, "O Father, O Father," but nothing more.

The effect of this execution on the spectators was uncanny; it made the impression of corpses being violated. Was it stoicism, courage, fanaticism, hardness of heart, or faith? Who can tell us?

Their remains, enclosed in three iron cages, were swung from the tower of St. Lambert. There they still hang,<sup>54</sup> although the few remaining bones were perhaps removed some years ago.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 59.

<sup>55</sup> Vedder, "Ref. in Germ.," 348.

Thus ended the Münster tragedy.

Ended, do I say? No, it was only the beginning of the real tragedy, for the sins of the Münster fanatics were visited on countless thousands of martyrs of the Anabaptist faith, innocent of any participation in the crime of Münster, abhorring it even with unspeakable loathing; yet, on account of the similarity of name and faith, falling under a common condemnation with the Münster fanatics.

## 2. *Revolutionary Movements in Holland*

The fanaticism of John Matthysz had spread like wild-fire all over the Netherlands. Ypey and Dermout draw a vivid picture of prevailing conditions during this period. The very air seemed filled with the wildest and most hysterical notions: <sup>56</sup>

Christ was to appear in the clouds of heaven, to establish him (John Matthysz) in his royal dignity. He would cast the pope of Rome, as the Antichrist, from his throne, and in his place he would solemnly appoint him as the head of the Church. Then only it would appear that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world. In the fullest sense it would be a heavenly kingdom, whose subjects would find here a heaven on earth. The New Jerusalem would descend from heaven, and the end of the state of man would be as the beginning. The earth would be a paradise of purest sensuality, of which the enjoyment was incapable of description. The loss of moral power would thereby be completely restored, and no corruption of morals would ever again be able to vitiate humanity.

The authors then tell us how this Mohammedan eschatology captured the hearts of men, especially young men, who scarcely knew what they were doing. They offered themselves for baptism in masses, and they went forth to

<sup>56</sup> *Sleidani Comm.*, Lib. X, p. 157, note 94; *Gesch. d. Ned. Herv. Kerk*, I, 124, 125.

attain the ideal pictured to them. They had no experience of war; they knew little of life; they were hypnotized by the picture presented to them—that was all.

By far the majority were not Anabaptists; they simply joined their ranks for what this joining might bring them. Most of them, at heart, had no religion at all; but the result was the same. Bands of armed Anabaptists appeared, as by magic, everywhere in the Lowlands. At Amsterdam, at 't Zand, at Bloemkamp they created terrible disturbances and seemed to be filled with a spirit of malicious deviltry. But everywhere they were dispersed by the authorities, and their leaders were cruelly punished. And it is worthy of note that practically all these disturbances coincide with the occurrences in Münster during the last stage of the siege; and that they are evidently vitally connected with the final desperate attempt made by John of Leyden to obtain succor for the sorely tried "New Jerusalem." The death of Matthysz and the inevitable collapse of the kingdom seemed unable to dampen the ardor of the fanatics.

On January 23, 1535, an attempt was made to surprise and burn Leyden. A month later, a party of fanatic Anabaptists took Oude Klooster, near Bolsward, and were there besieged and practically exterminated by the stadholder of Frisia. About the same time the riot at 't Zand, in the province of Groningen, took place; and on the tenth of May a serious attempt was made by the Anabaptists to get possession of Amsterdam, the chief city of Holland.

An earlier attempt on this city had been made, a year before, April 21, 1534. A large fleet, filled with Anabaptists, had been held at this city, as they were ready to start for Münster. Asked "whither they went," they replied, "To the land that God will show us." But the



next day the city was startled by the appearance of five men, stark naked, who ran about the streets, with naked swords in their hands, shouting: "In the name of the Lord, God's blessing is on the right side and his curse on the left side of the city. Repent, repent, woe to all unbelievers." They were apprehended and summarily executed. Justice moved quickly in those days. By energetic measures Amsterdam was saved at that time from an overt attack, because the authorities were warned of the coming storm.<sup>57</sup>

The projected attempt on Leyden was discovered, either at Amsterdam or by the castellan of the fortress of Woerden, January 23, 1535. The city was to be set on fire in several places and during the disturbance the effort to take it was to be made. An immediate house-to-house visitation discovered fifteen men and five women who were implicated in the plot. All of these, after a complete confession of their intentions, were immediately executed, the men being beheaded, the women drowned.

A similar attempt on the city of Dordt was discovered and frustrated at the same time.<sup>58</sup>

In the same year one of the weirdest occurrences of the disturbed times took place at 't Zand. It was the climax of Anabaptist fanaticism in Holland. The chief agents—we are told the whole story in detail in the *Bibliotheca*—were Herman Shoemaker, who claimed to be "the true prophet, the veritable Messiah, yea the Father himself," and Cornelius Kerkhof, a much younger man, who associated himself with the other and claimed to be the Son. Shoemaker lay in bed all day, in a half nude condition, with a keg of beer by his side, from which he frequently slaked his burning thirst, for he was hoarse

<sup>57</sup> Wagenaar, *Vaderl. Hist.* V, 75.

<sup>58</sup> Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, V, 88.



with crying, "Kill, kill, kill, monks and priests and all magistrates, our magistrates first of all." For two days he raged in this insane way, but apparently he made an impression and his fanaticism touched many as with a virulent contagion. During the night, one of the coldest of the winter, three hundred people were baptized in the open air. The frenzied people were willing and ready to follow the two self-appointed leaders anywhere and for any purpose, when suddenly Antony Kistemaker, one of the men sent out from Münster, appeared on the scene and, dreading the effect of the blasphemous pair on the plans of Zion, assaulted the "Son" and drove him from the place. The people seeing their idol so easily cast down, at once sided with the newcomer and with him turned on Shoemaker, whom they seized, bound with cords, and thus left him on the floor of his house to sober up. There the wretch was found by the constabulary, who had been advised of the disturbance and had been sent to quell it. After a terrific resistance he was finally secured and brought to the city of Groningen, where he was tortured to death, in the vain endeavor to wring from him the names of his accomplices. The only words he spoke were those of his old battle-cry, "Kill, kill, kill monks and priests and all magistrates, ours first of all."<sup>59</sup> Incidents like this indicate the excessively inflammable condition of the public mind.

One of the Münster emissaries was Jan van Geelen who, true to his commission, gathered together a band of three hundred Anabaptists and in the latter part of February, 1535, made an armed assault on a strongly defensible position, near the city of Bolsward, in Frisia, called *Het Oude Klooster* ("The Old Monastery"). The place was easily taken, the monks driven out, and the

<sup>59</sup> B. R. N., VII, 362 p.

church sacked. Presumably Van Geelen intended to make this spot the rallying-point for one of the armies of succor for the distressed city of Münster. But he had to deal with a stern man, Jurgen Schenk, the stadholder of the province. The latter quickly raised a small army and, after a sanguinary assault, succeeded in storming the position, putting practically the whole band of Anabaptists to the sword. Among those who died there was the brother of Menno Simons, the reorganizer of the sect of the Anabaptists. Among the few who escaped was the arch-plotter of the whole undertaking, Jan Van Geelen.<sup>60</sup>

He had one more effort in reserve, and that the most serious of all, the second attempt on the city of Amsterdam. Here he was destined to shoot his final bolt.

Amsterdam was evidently honeycombed with treason. Especially among the lower classes Anabaptists had a considerable following, and they were only waiting for proper leadership to make their power felt. How great was the tension among this class, as they lay hidden here and there in the city, appears from a bit of virulent fanaticism, preserved for us by Wagenaar. Some time before the attempt was made on the city, he tells us, a company of seven men and five women, led by Dirk de Snyder, after an exciting meeting, in which Dirk claimed to have seen the glory of God, deliberately stripped off all their garments and thus ran out into the streets of the city, shouting at the top of their voices, "Woe, woe, woe, the vengeance of God." All except one woman were at once apprehended. Without doubt, they were Anabaptists of the following of the House of Love of Hendrick Niklaes. Brought before the judges, they refused to put on any garments, with the explanation that they were

<sup>60</sup> Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, V, 91.

the naked truth, the image of God, and therefore were ashamed of nothing. All of them were sewed in sail-cloth, and, after a brief examination, executed.<sup>61</sup>

In these and similar occurrences the magistrates of the city saw the possibility of an attempt in force on the city of Amsterdam. Nor were they mistaken. And diligent as was their lookout for the signs of the times, they were nearly caught napping.

Jan Van Geelen after his fiasco in the North came to Amsterdam, early in the spring of 1535. He lived there under an assumed name and had the temerity to go to Brussels and, there confessing his guilt, to request letters of pardon from Margareth. He offered to deliver the city of Münster, which was still holding out, into the hands of the emperor. On this condition, the letters asked for were granted him, and he returned immediately to Amsterdam, where from that time on he associated with the best class of citizens.

Secretly, however, he kept in touch with the Anabaptists and made propaganda for the party, with such success that on the tenth of May he deemed himself strong enough to make the attempt. Hendrick Goedbeleid was the other leader of the conspiracy. They fully believed that the mass of the common people would join them as soon as an initial success had been attained. Hendrick of Hilversum had promised Amsterdam and two other cities to the king of Zion; and was he not a prophet of the Lord?

The tolling of the bell was to be the signal of attack in all parts of the city. The date chosen was that of the festival of the "Guild of the Cross-Brothers," always celebrated with a great banquet, at which the magistrates and the wealthiest citizens were present. But at the eleventh

<sup>61</sup> Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, V, 90.

hour the secret leaked out, in part at least, through information given by a young man who may have been related to one of the Anabaptists.

It was hard to convince the magistrates that the danger was real and imminent, for there had been scores of false alarms; and only reluctantly they took some measures of defense. It was said that the headquarters of the Rhetorical Chambers (*Rederykerskamers*) in the city were converted into an arsenal and that a goodly part of the armament of the conspirators was hidden there. But what to do? It was close to midnight, and the festivities were just about to break up. Some proposed one plan, others another. But suddenly, like the crack of doom, they heard the ruffling drums and the loud shouts of the onrushing Anabaptists. These were only a detachment of the main body, sent out to capture the city hall. This they succeeded in doing after a few citizens, who had been hastily dispatched to keep the place secure against attack, had been killed.

The burgomasters escaped by a hasty flight. Had the tocsin been sounded, as had been planned by the Anabaptists, Amsterdam might have been taken and have shared the fate of Münster. But history turns on small events. A drunken under-sheriff, hearing the tumult of the attack and insanely afraid, made his way into the belfry and drew up both rope and ladder after him, thus preventing the ringing of the bell, and therefore no signal for a general attack was given.

But the Anabaptists, weak as they were in numbers, were well armed and kept the city hall and the Dam against all attacks during the night. In one of these attacks, Peter Kolyn, one of the burgomasters of the city, lost his life. The Anabaptists were, however, closely invested, and all hope for outside aid was cut off. When

the day dawned the citizens attacked the besieged in dead earnest, and after desperate resistance the city hall was finally taken. Of the entire Anabaptist band only twelve were taken alive; all the others died fighting with a heroism worthy of a better cause. Jan van Geelen deliberately exposed himself to the fire of the besiegers and was shot to death. Twenty-eight Anabaptists and twenty citizens were killed in the fighting. All the captives were either immediately or subsequently executed. Not a known Anabaptist in the city was spared. Thus Amsterdam was saved.<sup>62</sup>

Subsequent revelations made it evident that the danger had even been more serious than was expected. Three hundred Anabaptists from Benskoop, ordered by Jan van Geelen to report at Amsterdam on May 10, returned when they discovered that the attempt had failed. And two large vessels filled with Anabaptists arrived in the harbor of Amsterdam on the same day, and hearing of the failure of the plan, turned about and sailed for England.

When after these failures in Holland, Münster finally succumbed and its king was publicly executed, the millennial frenzy seemed to have worked itself out. The dreary chapter, written by Hoffman and the disciples of his school, had run to its final paragraph; from the fall of Münster the fanaticism of the Anabaptists abated. They became sane and sober, and the alien elements, drawn into their circles by the Hoffmanite chiliasm, soon were purged out. The new party eschewed the hated name Anabaptist (*Wederdoofer*) and adopted for themselves a new and pacific name, by which they were known in subsequent Dutch history, that of Baptists (*Doopsgezinden*).

<sup>62</sup> Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, V, 91-99.

### 3. *The Menace of the Old Name*

Newman has correctly said, "No episode in history has done so much to impede the progress of Baptist principles as that of Münster. Its influence is still quite marked in Germany and other European countries."<sup>63</sup> The name "Anabaptist" became a synonym for violence, outrage, rebellion, sensuality, and every kind of outrage.

Say Ypey and Dermout, "The recalcitrant Anabaptists, mostly of the lower classes, during the period of which we now write, have made themselves notorious by the most unheard-of riots, which were accompanied with a folly and lack of true religion, which transcend everything."<sup>64</sup> The sober-minded portion of the Anabaptists had deeply felt this, and they had bitterly resented the outrage committed by these fanatics against their heritage, a name which in Switzerland had been the synonym of mutual love and non-resistance and faithfulness unto death.

In a meeting at Sparendam, in January, 1535, when the Münster tragedy was still in full swing, it had been shown that they [the quiet, peaceful party among them] were in the majority. And in a large gathering at Bocholt, in Westphalia, in the summer of 1536, they were so completely victorious that the impure and riotous elements were thrown out.<sup>65</sup>

And yet they were identified with them by the Church as well as by the State. As we have seen, they chose a separate name to distinguish themselves from the riotous party, but all in vain.

Rome carried the matter even further. It did not distinguish between any particular sects of heretics, who all had this in common, that they opposed her, in her

<sup>63</sup> "Hist. of Antip." 292.

<sup>64</sup> *Gesch. d. Herv. Kerk*, I, 120.

<sup>65</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 59.



organization, her theology and rites—and so she named them all Anabaptists.

Thus it happened that the detestation merited only by some of the Anabaptists became the burden of all Protestants.<sup>66</sup> All alike were persecuted by the Inquisition as belonging to one and the same family.

But when this wider identification was finally set aside by a more critical study of Protestantism as to life and doctrine, and when it was seen that the antipedobaptists stood in a class by themselves, the identification between Anabaptists and Baptists remained as absolute as ever. Says Glasius the historian: <sup>67</sup>

Very dear the Doopsgezinden had to pay for the fact that, in some points, they were of the same mind with the Wederdoopers. Not only did they have to bear the hated name, but they were especially the victims on which the sword of the Inquisition dulled itself. They were grossly ill-treated, and the Protestants were led to hate them to the utmost, under the impression that they were the progeny of the Münster sect.

Therefore it turned out that, after the Münster tragedy, the name Anabaptist became a menace, a thing to recoil from in horror, a thing to frighten with, and an absolutely sure way to the hangman's noose or the executioner's axe or stake. Woe to the man or woman who could be proved to have a right to the name!

In June, 1539, a placard was issued against them, under which

All so-called prophets, apostles, or bishops among the Anabaptists were condemned to death by fire; and all other Anabaptists to the sword or the pit without the right, on the part of the judges, to use even the least mercy toward these people, on account of their evil intentions.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Gesch. d. Ned. Herv. Kerk.*, I, 131, 132.

<sup>67</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 120.

<sup>68</sup> Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, V, 100.



And yet how they differed from each other. Even a casual glance at the two parties suffices.

The Dutch Baptists or Mennonites, in distinction from the Anabaptists, stood for a purely religious program. The latter had political aspirations, dreamed millennial dreams, obeyed the lusts of the flesh, greedily used carnal means to attain carnal ends, saw visions of world dominion, paid little or no attention to the Scriptures, but derived what little spiritual light they had from the flickering flames of their own inward experience, and all in all, displayed little of the life of Christ in their own lives.

The former withdrew from the world with almost ascetic austerity; they had abandoned, as a menace, all millennial ideals; they were moral examples to all who knew them, their bitterest enemies being witnesses. They felt themselves strangers and pilgrims here, and they sought a city whose founder and builder is God. They depended absolutely on the Scriptures for their faith, and they were marvelously skilled in their use; and of nearly every one of them it might be said, "a close follower of Christ." The Anabaptists and the Mennonites sprang from one stem, but they were as different as Esau and Jacob, as different as bitter and sweet, as sin and righteousness. Of course, I am thinking here of the Dutch *Wederdoopers* and *Doopsgezinden*. As the waters from the same spring on the "Great Divide," separating at the very source, turn in part to the placid Pacific and in part to the stormy Atlantic, thus these two, having a common historical origin, have separated and differentiated themselves, until only the faintest family trace remains to betray this common origin. We turn our backs to the radicals and our faces to the conservatives, in the next lecture.

### III

#### THE CONSERVATIVES

FROM Ypres to the border of the Oise above Noyon, more than a hundred miles in longitude and from a dozen to fifty miles in latitude, we find today the most appalling desert of which the mind can conceive. Once seen the picture of devastation can never be forgotten.

It was not always thus, the desert is not God-made but man-made. In all these hundreds of square miles once happiness reigned and thrift and prosperity; small and larger streams lazily flowed through smiling valleys and fertile fields, cattle dotted the pastures, forests beautified the landscape, the laugh of the young and the quavering voices of the old were heard on every side. There was no fairer land, nor one more obviously prosperous than Northern France and Southern Belgium, before the war. It has all been wiped out with the besom of destruction. Hamlets and villages and towns are absolutely obliterated, forests are removed as with a wizard's wand, and for decades not even a shadow of their imposing glory can return; the very ruins are ominous with the menace of death, which lurks in countless unexploded shells, whether in the rubbish pile or in the furrow to be turned up by the plow.

And over all these miles of wilderness we may well write, "Behold what the frenzy of man has wrought!" And yet this desert is the geographical link between the prosperity on the North and that on the South. Simons has called this desert "a monstrous and amazing miracle

of destruction.”<sup>1</sup> And thus between the bitter-sweet experiences of the Anabaptists in their Swiss home, and the bitter-sweet experiences of these same people in their Dutch history, there lies the desert of the fanatical frenzy of the Hoffmanite group of Anabaptists, as it expressed itself in the riots and wantonness, and bloodshed of the Münster tragedy and the multitudinous outbursts of a similar character, in Holland and elsewhere.

As the Belgian-French desert is a geographical link between the fertile North and the fertile South, so Hoffmanism is a historical link between Switzerland and Holland.

Cardinal Newman tells us somewhere, in his *Historical Sketches*, of the providence of God which used the Normans, the descendants of the Norsemen, to quell the Viking power in England. And thus from an offshoot of the Hoffmanite movement, deliverance was to come to the Dutch Anabaptists. The fiercely foaming current of radicalism was to be replaced, and that forever, by the placid stream of conservatism. A conservatism, however, not to be measured by the accepted meaning of the term, as our further research will clearly indicate; but fully applicable in comparison with the turbulence of the theological and social radicals whom we have met heretofore. Several names at once clamor for recognition—the Philips brothers, Menno Simons, Leonard Bouwens, and others. Of all these Menno Simons and the Philips brothers have an outstanding significance for the history, the theology, and the life of the churches they founded.

### 1. *Obbe Philips*

Except among Dutch and a few German historians, up to this time Obbe Philips was little more than a name.

<sup>1</sup> “Evening Post,” Louisville, Ky., January 25, 1919.

Invaluable light has been spread over his personality by the *Bibliotheca*, in which we find a reprint of his "Confession" (*Bekentnisse*). Says Dr. S. Cramer:<sup>2</sup>

What is known of Obbe's life has been related by Dr. De Hoop Scheffer, in a treatise printed in the *Doopsgezinde Bydragen* of 1884, pages 1-24. He wrote under the caption, "The Installer of Menno." Further we have Krause's article, in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*; although as early as 1733 a very exhausting and uncommonly keen treatise about Obbe had been published in the form of a dissertation, by J. H. Hilmers.

Besides these we have some minor sources: a single letter, dated 1538 or 1539, and the confession of Jan van Batenborch, obtained under torture in 1537, in which Obbe is called "the son of a priest in West Frisia and one of the principal Anabaptists."

But the "Confession," reprinted in the *Bibliotheca*, is after all the only source, from which all have derived their scant information.

We know nothing about his parentage except what we learn from Batenborch, for on this point Obbe himself is silent.

He was unquestionably the direct connecting link between the Hoffmanites and the founders of the brotherhood of Anabaptists, who after Münster began to call themselves Baptists (*Doopsgezinden*), and these founders were his brother Derck and Menno Simons.

He was himself baptized and chosen and ordained as bishop by Bartelt Boeckbinder and Derk Cuper, who had been sent to Vriesland by John Matthysz. And he, in his turn, "ordained his brother Derck in Den Ham, David Joris in Delft, and Menno Simons in Groningen."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> B. R. N., VII, 94.

<sup>3</sup> B. R. N., VII, 45.

Neither he, nor his brother, nor Menno had anything to do with the wild fanaticism which soon pervaded the entire Anabaptist movement in Holland. The excesses of the Münsterites shocked and amazed him. And he soon was deeply convinced that he had committed a grave error in joining the sect at all, for current events were making a deep impression on his mind.

Says V. P. (an unknown author, who hides his identity behind these two letters) in the *Successio Anabaptistica*,<sup>4</sup>

These and similar ravings and the fanaticism which had no aim but the ruin of united Christendom, have moved Obbe Philips to lament the false and lying mission which he had received and also the empty and powerless and hurtful mission, which he in turn had imparted to the three missionaries, Derck Philips, Menno Simons, and David Joris.

In the distress of his soul, he laid the matter before his brother and Menno and begged them, with him, to demit the office which he had given them. They flatly refused to do so and separated in anger from him. And this it is that caused him to write his "Confession."

As a matter of course he was excommunicated by the Anabaptists, whose new name originated some time after his departure from the brotherhood. Later he was called the "Demas" of the movement by Menno. His detractors tell us that he returned to the Romish Church, for which there is not an iota of proof. This slander is of late origin and is absolutely disproved by the contents of the "Confession."<sup>5</sup> Doctor Cramer has clearly proved this in his wonderful introduction to the tract.

After his break with the Anabaptists, he stood apparently outside of all church connection. If the true Church was not founded by the Anabaptists, where was

<sup>4</sup> B. R. N., VII, 47.

<sup>5</sup> B. R. N., VII, 95.

it to be sought; or had it ceased to exist, and was the thread of apostolic succession broken forever? Sebastian Franck, Obbe's contemporary, answered this question affirmatively; so did many Mennonites later on, and the Collegiants and the later Darbists and others. And, says Doctor Cramer, "therewith a conviction was uttered, which since the eighteenth century has leavened one-half of the Protestant Church."<sup>6</sup>

The "Confession" of Obbe Philips has often been critically attacked and its genuineness has been placed in jeopardy. It first appeared in Amsterdam in 1584, and before 1609 it had passed through a second and third edition. It was translated in French, under the title *Obbe Philippe Reconnaissance*, and in 1720 it was published in a German translation. No volume in all the Anabaptist literature was more widely and avidly read than this. Why then these efforts to discountenance it?

It was a thorn in the sides of the Mennonites, because it identified them with the Anabaptists as springing from the same root, and thus its genuineness was bitterly attacked. But several critics undertook its defense, leaning heavily on the testimony of Carel van Ghent, who evidently was familiar with it, and who was practically a contemporary of Obbe. And yet so great a scholar as Dr. Blaupot ten Cate, in the nineteenth century, revived the doubt which first had been created by Dr. Hermanus Schyn, in 1744. Ten Cate was joined by Sepp, in 1872, in his *Geschiedkundige Nasporingen* ("Historical Researches"). But De Hoop Scheffer brilliantly refuted all these attacks in 1884, in the *Doopsgezinde Bydragen* ("Baptist Contributions"), and Dr. S. Cramer adds the finishing touches to the argument in his illuminating introduction to the work in the *Bibliotheca*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> B. R. N., VII, 99.

<sup>7</sup> B. R. N., VII, 102-108.



The "Confession" of Obbe Philips is worth reading; I freely confess that none of the *Anabaptistica*, in the wonderful collection of the *Bibliotheca*, affected me as did this one.

It grips one, it seems to conjure up the whole scene; the sorrow-smitten man, the deep consciousness of the wrong he committed and which he now seeks to undo, his stern judges, the love of former brethren turned to hatred—you see it all, you feel it all, after these four hundred years.

It is indeed a wonderful confession! Not in vain does Dr. S. Cramer say of it,<sup>8</sup>

No more circumstantial or vivid, no more deeply felt or more finely drawn, and no more trustworthy picture of the tendencies and ideas, which were current among the Dutch Anabaptists, from 1534-1536, and of the mind which then prevailed among them, has come down to us.

He is so absolutely modest, so evidently contrite, so whole-souled in his sorrow, that we can almost hear the sob in his voice as he tells the story; we seem to hear the tears drop on the paper as he writes.

Yet one of his fellow Anabaptist bishops, Peter van Ceulen, called this book "a partisan slander," and the author "a bad man, fallen away from God, who thereafter lived an ungodly carnal life, till his death." And even Menno Simons called him "a Demas."<sup>9</sup>

In his whole book Obbe quotes the Scriptures only once. In the Anabaptist circles, in his day, they had not yet been restored to their true place, as the foundation of faith. That was to be Menno's task. Obbe's call had come to him in a great wave of emotionality; he had obeyed it in the same mood, and now lays it down again

<sup>8</sup> B. R. N., VII, 91.

<sup>9</sup> Opera Omnia, 1681, 312.

with a breaking heart. The Hoffmanites moved in other than Scriptural spheres; but among them were many naturally pious men, and Obbe Philips was a prince among them.

## 2. *Derck Philips*

Derck Philips, the brother of Obbe, was probably born at Leeuwarden in Frisia, in 1504.<sup>10</sup> He apparently shared with his brother the misfortune of a bar sinister; for their father is said to have been a priest of the Church of Rome, "which is not so strange if one knows, that in that period in Vriesland a married priesthood was the rule."<sup>11</sup> Thus this bar sinister was only an ecclesiastical one, and in the eyes of his fellow Frisians the matter may have seemed regular enough. It is said that he belonged to the Franciscan order, but whether he was in orders or not, so much is sure, that he was an educated man. He calls his own attainments "a small, simple talent" (*eene cleyne eenvoudige gave*); but his contemporaries thought differently, and posterity has confirmed their judgment. We may judge from his *Enchiridion* that he knew Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. One of his writings was originally written in French and thence translated into Dutch, i. e., his tract on "The Evangelical Ban and Avoidance." On the other hand, his reply to the letters of Sebastian Franck is so full of Germanisms that the conclusion is unavoidable that he knew German. He must have been therefore quite a linguist.

It is not clear whether he ever attended a university, although his intimate acquaintance with the works of Luther and Erasmus might point to Wittenberg and Louvain. And yet his somewhat sneering remark<sup>12</sup> "that

<sup>10</sup> Blaupot ten Cate, *Gesch. d. Doopsg. in Vriesl.*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> B. R. N., X, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ench., B. R. N., X, 217, 224, 225.

some theologians who, on account of the gospel and of their office as teachers, permit themselves to be called Masters, Licentiates, Doctors, yea Reverend Fathers and Lords in Christ," indicates that he has no great respect for or fear of the usual university dignities and dignitaries.

Cassander, who was a bitter enemy of the Mennonites, pays him the following tribute: "His zeal was no less great than that of Menno Simons, and he was as great as he in popular eloquence. But in learning and familiarity with classic letters he far excelled him."

In the winter of 1533-1534 he was baptized on confession of faith. This baptism took place at Leeuwarden, in Vriesland, and was administered by Pieter Houtsagher, an apostle of John Matthysz. This we know for certain from the united testimony of the *Successio Anabaptistica* and from the "Confession" of his brother Obbe.<sup>13</sup> Soon after this baptism he was ordained to the ministry by his brother. His enemies accused him of having taken part in the riotous attack on Oude Klooster, in 1535, and this accusation was vehemently pressed home by the author of the *Successio Anabaptistica*,<sup>14</sup> but his brother Obbe twice assures us to the contrary.<sup>15</sup>

By nature he was too well balanced and too sober-minded a man to be moved by such fanaticism. And if any further assurance in regard to his attitude to the Münsterites is needed, we find it in the fact that he controverted this fanaticism in public print. Rottman had written his widely read tract, "Restoration of the True and Healthy Doctrine of Christ" (*Herstelling van de rechte en gezonde Leer van Christus*), in 1534, during the siege of Münster, and in this tract he had boldly de-

<sup>13</sup> B. R. N., VII, 45, 136.

<sup>14</sup> B. R. N., VII, 46, 61.

<sup>15</sup> B. R. N., VII, 135.

fended all the fanatical proceedings of the Münsterites. And Derck Philips had replied to this work of Rottman, in a characteristic treatise, entitled "Of the Spiritual Restoration" (*Van de geestelyke Herstelling*), in which all these extravagances were combated and in which the prophecies concerning the kingdom of Christ were spiritually explained.<sup>16</sup>

But he fought in vain, with Menno Simons, to stem the wild current of fanaticism. Only after the fall of Münster, the remnant of the crushed Anabaptists were willing to listen and to be sanely led, and thus a regeneration of the sect took place and the Anabaptists (*Wederdoopers*) became Baptists (*Doopsgezinden*).

Says Otius: <sup>17</sup>

And when, about 1536, Ubbo and Derck Philips, sons of a priest in Leeuwarden, had agreed to form a new party or faction, after they had seceded from the Hoffmanites, by whom, however, in 1534 they had been created bishops, and also from the remainder of the Münsterites, of whose institution they had always disapproved; Menno being persuaded by them and having relinquished his papal priesthood, has suffered himself to be created bishop of the new faction.

When Obbe left them, Menno Simons and Derck Philips became the faithful leaders of the reformed Dutch Anabaptists. They frequently differed on matters in debate, but they stood side by side in the working out of the tremendous task which they had undertaken, of making a homogeneous whole out of distinctly heterogeneous elements. In how far they succeeded will appear later on. Sometimes there were sharp differences between these two leaders, but when Menno died in 1561, he was still able to call Derck what he had called him in 1550, "my

<sup>16</sup> B. R. N., VII, 559 p.; X, 339 p.

<sup>17</sup> *Annales Anabaptistici*, 84.

faithful and much beloved brother.” Derck survived Menno seven years, dying in 1568.

In the records of the Court of Inquisition against some Anabaptists surprised at Utrecht in 1561, at the house of Cornelius van Voordt, where people had been baptized and the Lord's Supper had been administered, one of the witnesses had something to say of the appearance of Philips: “He was an old man with white hair, of medium stature, dressed in black, with a round cap, and he talked the dialect of the Brabanders.”

Where H. Schyn obtained his cut of the portrait of Derck he does not tell us, but in his “More Extensive Treatise” (*Uitvoeriger Verhandeling*) among others, we find an excellent copperplate of the face and person of the great leader.<sup>18</sup> As seen there he was a man with a broad face, a wide but low forehead, keen, resolute eyes, a well-formed, straight nose, a short neck, and a long flowing beard, parted in the middle, and a heavy, drooping mustache. The picture is that of a man in middle life. The face expresses great determination, even unto stubbornness. If the picture is authentic, it is just like the picture one would conjure up from reading his works and the story of his life. Schyn called him “a very reverend and learned man, in those days, who was second to none among the Mennonites.” But when he wrote in the middle of the eighteenth century he complained that it “was a sad thing that no more of the writings of that man have come down to us, for we have nothing of all his works, but only one little book, known as *Enchiridion*.”<sup>19</sup>

In the *Bibliotheca*, we have now all the known writings of Philips, and they are a veritable treasure-house of information, concerning the Anabaptists of his time. The *Enchiridion* covers more than four hundred quarto pages

<sup>18</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.*, 326.

<sup>19</sup> Idem, 326.

in the tenth volume of the *Bibliotheca*, whilst all the remainder of this volume of more than seven hundred pages is devoted to him.

If we candidly compare the writings of Menno with those of Derck Philips, it seems to me self-evident that Derck was not a whit less a leader of the Doopsgezinden than the former. He suffered as much, he labored as hard, he ruled as well as Menno. And the question is whether Menno, so much more pliable than Derck, would have taken the place he now occupies in Anabaptist history without the sterner fiber and the clearer views of his colaborer. If one searches for a definite, clear-cut, finished statement of the doctrines and views of life of the early Doopsgezinden, we find it in the writings of Derck Philips, more even than in those of Menno.

Menno changed, repented of decisions made and things done; on his death-bed he admitted that he had often been led beyond his convictions by stronger minds; Derck Philips never. He is the Petra, the rock-man, among those early followers of the reconstructed Anabaptist movement, a typical Frisian in his mentality and immovable resoluteness.

His *Enchiridion* is the treasury of conservative Anabaptist doctrine in his day. Says Dr. F. Pyper of it:<sup>20</sup>

It was for the Mennonites (and the majority of the Anabaptists followed him as their true leader) what the *Loci Communes* of Melancthon were for the Lutherans; Calvin's Institutes and the confession of Beza, for the Calvinists; and the *Leken-Wechwyser* ("The Layman's Guide") for the early Dutch Protestants.

Its theology is strongly "spiritualistic," in the sense which the word conveys to Doctor Pyper, i. e., it accentuates the work of the Holy Spirit. All believers outside

<sup>20</sup> B. R. N., X, 4.



of their communion belong to the "world." He knows nothing of the relation between the Waldenses and the Anabaptists.<sup>21</sup> All the fundamental points of faith are clearly, boldly, and succinctly stated. One never hesitates as to what Derck Philips really means or where he stands. His style is clear, perspicuous, and simple.

All in all, the tenth volume of the *Bibliotheca*, containing the writings of Derck Philips, is perhaps the most illuminating of the whole series, in the insight it affords us into the real world of thought and action of the new branch of the Anabaptist movement which had sprung into being after the Münster fiasco of the Hoffmanite group.

### 3. Menno Simons

The vast majority of the Dutch Anabaptists, as we have seen, were bitterly averse to the fanatic excesses of the Münster party. Says Madame Brons, "Their abhorrence of all violence was such that they would not recognize any one as brother who had received baptism at Münster."<sup>22</sup>

But their communion had been sadly disrupted, and everywhere they looked for a Moses, a leader, a man filled with the Spirit and with power, able to organize the scattered believers and to give them confidence in the future. And such a man they found in Menno Simons. Alas, how very much of darkness remains in all this page of history! How little we know about Menno! The date of his birth and even the year are unknown. We know that he was born at Witmarsum in Vriesland, but we know neither his father's name nor his mother's, nor what was their social position. Rumor has

<sup>21</sup> Idem, 83, 369.

<sup>22</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 59.

it that he, as well as Erasmus and the two Philips brothers, was the son of a priest. He had one brother at least, and of him we know that he died in the riot of Oude Klooster and therefore had joined the Anabaptists presumably before Menno. We also know that Menno was married and had several children who, all but one daughter, died before their parents.

So much, or rather so little, we know of Menno's private life.

In his autobiographical sketch, he tells us that he was priest in Pingjum, when he was twenty-eight years old, and that even after three years of service, as such, he had never read the Bible. But one day, when he was celebrating mass, a horrible doubt about the Church doctrine suddenly assailed him. He prayed and struggled against it, but in vain; then he sought carnal diversions, all to no purpose. He now began to read the Bible and the works of Luther and slowly began to work his way to the light. Of the Anabaptists he knew nothing as yet. But he was suddenly startled into a new mental and spiritual struggle by a great doubt about baptism, which assailed him when he witnessed the execution of Sicke Frerich at Leeuwarden. Soon it became like fire in his bones; he found rest neither day nor night. He read after Luther, who taught him that children were baptized on account of their own faith. Then he turned to Bucer, and he taught him that they were baptized as a guaranty of a godly training; to Bullinger, and he told him that baptism and circumcision were practically one, the one having replaced the other. Then he began to doubt all these teachers, who did not agree among themselves, and all their theories, and became convinced that infant baptism was unscriptural.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 60.

He saw the Anabaptist movement in Vriesland grow in volume; but he also saw the sudden fanatic frenzy which took hold of the Hoffmanites, his own brother falling a victim to it, at Oude Klooster, near his own home at Witmarsum, where he then functioned as a Romish priest; and he shuddered. The burden of all these wandering, shepherdless sheep fell heavily on his soul; he began to chafe under the galling bonds of his vows, and he began to preach what he believed to be the truth from the pulpit. As we have seen, he was baptized in 1534, and later inducted into the office of a bishop among the Anabaptists by Obbe Philips. But between that baptism and the acceptance of the cross of an Anabaptist bishop we find a bitter period of great mental anxiety and struggle.<sup>24</sup>

Menno was now a member of the Anabaptist communion through baptism, while he still functioned as a priest in the Catholic Church. When the situation became intolerable, he broke away from the Church, surrendered his home, and sank down into the mass of the poor unknown, as he thought, very likely supporting himself by manual labor.<sup>25</sup> And there, in his retreat, a delegation of Anabaptists of sober type came to him and begged of him to become their leader. After much hesitation and prayer, he consented, believing this course to be the will of God, and hearing in his soul the echo of Paul's words, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." Thus he became the center of that new type of Anabaptists, who, discarding the abhorred name *Wederdoopers*, adopted the name *Doopsgezinden*.

They among the various sects of Protestantism occupied a platform all their own. If it be true that Luther

<sup>24</sup> Idem, 64; as to his baptism, compare B. R. N., VII, 362.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, 64.

had for his "formal principle" the authority of the Holy Scriptures and for his material principle that of the doctrine of justification, we may safely say that the Menonites or Doopsgezinden, following the cue given them by their leader, chose for their formal principle the doctrine of the new creature. If the other Protestants found the center of gravity in doctrine, they placed it in life. Thus began the life-work of Menno Simons. All his life long he was ever a marked and hounded man, forever in danger of death; for he was known as the arch-heretic, the veritable high priest of the quiet folk, to whom he ministered, but who were still branded with the hated name "Anabaptist." On December 15, 1542, a personal imperial edict was issued against him, in which a price was set on his head, and in which all who aided or harbored him were threatened with summary execution. And thus he wandered from place to place, now in Groningen, then in Embden, then in Cologne. His home—for he married and raised a family of children—was very likely in Wismar. He was a voluminous writer and an ardent debater in defense of his faith. In 1547, the well-known meeting took place at Embden, in which Menno, the Philips brothers, Gilles van Aachen, Hendrick van Vrenen, and presumably also Leonard Bouwens, who had been sent out by Menno and Derck Philips, debated with Adam Pastor and Frans Cuyper on the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the ban, etc. The meeting adjourned to Goch in Cleve and there Adam Pastor was "banned."

Eastward from Embden lay the chosen field of Menno and Derck Philips, whilst Bouwens became the great apostle of Frisia and Holland in general, where, in a few years, he baptized ten thousand people.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Idem, 78.

All sorts of nicknames were given to Menno's followers, such as "new-monks," *Gleissner*, men who would be saved by good works, "sacrament-spoilers," "child-soul murderers," "Communists," "house-slippers," because they slipped into the houses where they met through side entrances; and in Holland, in some districts, they were called "syrup-lickers," because it is said that Menno once narrowly escaped capture when as he preached from the top of a barrel, the bottom suddenly caved in, just as the alarm was given of the near approach of the enemy. His friends are said, on that occasion, to have stripped the sticky fluid from the garments of their beloved leader to facilitate his powers of locomotion, and to have licked their fingers after the operation.

Menno wrote and disputed incessantly, as his large collection of works abundantly witnesses. At Wismar he gathered in secret a small but devoted congregation, and there he came in painful contact with the followers of John à Lasco, who had escaped from London, on the accession of "Bloody Mary" to the throne in 1553.

The last years of Menno's life were full of trouble. The controversy about the application of the ban caused a rupture between him and Derck Philips. The schismatic spirit now began to lift its head among his followers, and he found himself between two fires. From a controversy about the enforcement of the ban and what they called "Avoidance" (on the part of married people, one of whom was excommunicated), two parties arose among the followers of Menno, bitterly hostile to each other, a rigorous and a temperate party. Menno, always conciliating in his attitude, modified his position considerably and thus the Upper-German party, on the one hand, began to suspect him and the Dutch party, on the other.

In 1559, Menno wrote his last book, an apologetic



against Sylis and Lemke, who had sown the seeds of distrust against him. His soul was deeply burdened on account of the churches, "to which," as Brons says,<sup>27</sup> "he had devoted all his knowledge, all his powers, all his will and faith and love, that he might promote their moral well-being and unity."

He closed his tired eyes on January 31, 1561, at Wüstenfelde, near Oldesloe, in Holstein, and there he sleeps in Christ, on his own little farm, buried in secret as he had died, lest the enemy desecrate his bones. The barren fields about it had been changed into a garden of God by the tireless labors of his followers. The cruel devastation of the Thirty Years War swept over it, and lo, the desert resumed its sway, so that no one ever knew where his poor body was laid to rest.

In 1902, the German Mennonites raised a monument to Menno, near Oldesloe. Benedict claimed that Menno was baptized by immersion, because he had expressed himself in favor of "dipping,"<sup>28</sup> although the Anabaptists, who baptized him, knew nothing of that mode of baptism and always sprinkled or affused. There is no scintilla of proof for the truth of this statement in any of the documents of the *Bibliotheca*, or in any of the biographies of Menno. Had it been true, a thing so obviously at variance with the general practise of the Anabaptists must have been noted by friend and foe alike. It is impossible to deny the charge against Menno that he vacillated on the subject of the ban. In his first *Ban-boeck* of 1550, and in his letter, written to those of the city of Franeker and of West Frisia, in 1555, and to those of Embden in 1556, he took position unquestionably in favor of the milder policy. There must be no ban without

<sup>27</sup> Idem, 105.

<sup>28</sup> Benedict, "Gen. Hist. Bapt. Den.," 82.



the regular Scriptural admonition. But in 1558 he had radically changed his views. In cases of the application of the ban, there was to be no longer any admonition, but strict and swift judgment and absolute avoidance in the relations between married people, on one of whom the ban had fallen.<sup>29</sup>

In his old age he had been frightened into the acceptance of the more radical views by a threat of the ban for himself, which Leonard Bouwens held over his head. And thus he traveled with Bouwens and the others to Cologne to bring over the German congregations to this view. When they refused, they were all put under the ban, and the Menno party considered itself as the only true Church.

All his life long Menno had hated violence, and therefore he most cordially detested the Münsterites. Says he, in his autobiography, before the "*Opera Omnia*," printed in 1681 :

Know, my good reader, that in all my days I have never assented to those of Münster, in the aforesaid articles (king, sword, rebellion, resistance, polygamy, and such other horrors), but according to my small talents, have warned against these horrible aberrations, for more than seventeen years, and have ever opposed them. But I have brought some of them, with the word of God, to the right way. Münster I have never seen in all my life; I have never been in their communion and, by the grace of God, if there be any of them left, I will neither eat nor drink with them, as the Scriptures teach me, unless they heartily acknowledge their abominations and give proof of true repentance and walk rightly according to the gospel.

As Schyn reproduces his picture, we see a spare man, of medium height, with a broad brow and extremely mild eyes. His face is deeply lined, his forehead wrinkled,

<sup>29</sup> B. R. N., VII, 443, 444, 448.

with vertical lines between the eyes, indicative of concentration. The nose is slightly aquiline, beard and mustache are long and heavy. A tight-fitting black cap, of the usual pattern of the sixteenth century, covers his head and ears. It is the face of a good man, capable of endless suffering.<sup>30</sup> The picture in the biography of Dr. A. M. Cramer, of 1837, is that of a much younger man, with a round skull-cap and curly hair flowing thick about the ears. The face, however, has the same general characteristics. Doctor Pyper places Menno Simons below Derck Philips, as regards general and classical erudition.<sup>31</sup> With that judgment Dr. A. M. Cramer seems to agree, when he tells <sup>32</sup> us that Menno,

neither by natural talent or development, nor by study and contact with others, ever attained a special degree of culture. But he had a real love for the truth and for the glory of God, a true faith in Jesus Christ, humility and steadfastness under all circumstances, and a fiery zeal for the cause of his Master and for the salvation of his fellow men.

Opinions about his style have greatly differed. Mosheim describes him as "possessing the invaluable gift of a natural and convincing eloquence, sufficient to pass with the masses of the people for an oracle."<sup>33</sup> But his Dutch translator appends a note to this statement of Mosheim, which seriously damages the "oracle." Says he:

He had an exceedingly monotonous way of writing, many and unnecessary repetitions, an exceedingly great commingling of sentences and things. He was pious, but unimpressive and admonitions and other similar defects make the reading of his writings highly disagreeable.

<sup>30</sup> Schyn, 215.

<sup>31</sup> B. R. N., X, 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Het Lev. e. d. Verr., van M. S.*, 158.

<sup>33</sup> "Ch. Hist.," VII, 253 (Dutch Ed.).

And I am afraid that those of us who have read or tried to read after Menno, will have to admit that the Dutch annotator was right. As a writer, he is impressive only when deeply stirred. But how is it possible that one can be "an oracle" as a speaker, and tedious as a writer? His two chief doctrines were (1) the need of regeneration and (2) the gathering of a church which shall truly be a body of believers.<sup>34</sup>

Dr. A. M. Cramer, against later evidence, questions whether Menno was ever baptized, although he certainly was not immersed.<sup>35</sup> His enemies accused him of craftiness. We would rather call it quick-wittedness. One day, it is said, as he rode on a wagon, trying to escape almost certain capture, a band of men rode up, stopped the wagon, and the leader loudly demanded "whether Menno Simons were on that vehicle." Menno was seated with the driver and turned about deliberately to his fellow travelers with the remark, "These men want to know whether Menno Simons is on this wagon." When they answered in the negative, he turned to the chief constable, and said, "The friends say no."<sup>36</sup> It is rather refreshing to know that all the drabness of his life had not been able to utterly destroy his innate sense of humor. He told no lie, but simply availed himself of a legitimate means of escape.

A. M. Cramer's estimate of the man is not very flattering. Says he, "All in all, he seems to me to have been a man of a narrow and small rather than of a great and liberal spirit, namely, in comparison with the other Reformers."<sup>37</sup> His was undoubtedly an impressionable mind, easily moved to change, for of these same Mün-

<sup>34</sup> A. M. Cramer, *Het Leven, etc.*, 162.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, 158.

<sup>36</sup> B. R. N., VII, 362.

<sup>37</sup> A. M. Cramer, *Het Leven, etc.*, 158.

sterites, whom he so bitterly attacked in his autobiography, he said in 1539:

I do not doubt that our brethren, who formerly went a little astray, because they wanted to defend their faith with arms, have a merciful God. They sought only Jesus Christ and life eternal; and therefore they left home, garden, soil, father, mother, wife, child, and even their own lives.<sup>38</sup>

Menno disapproved of rebaptism of his followers among themselves, as they passed from one faction to the other. He refused to rebaptize the wife of Eydes, because she had been baptized by one of the Münster party, and here for once he was joined by Leonard Bouwens.<sup>39</sup> And yet this same Bouwens had forced him "to do things for fear of the ban for which he was sorry."

For when Menno had gone to Franeker and thence to Harlingen with the brethren, a stricter application of the ban was proposed. Menno hesitated and was asked to go out of the room. As he went out Bouwens stood at the door and laying his hand on Menno's head, said: "Menno has not yet grown above our heads. If he cannot follow us, we will do to him as is done to other ministers." Whereupon Menno was much frightened and disturbed. And thus, under compulsion, Menno changed from the milder to the stricter doctrine of the ban.<sup>40</sup> It was the thing which caused him to say to an intimate friend on his death-bed, "How sorry I am that I consented to the Avoidance (*Echtmydinghe*)."<sup>41</sup> And again, "Be no slave of men as I have been."

Under similar circumstances, as the event proved, Derck Philips would have been immovable as a rock.

<sup>38</sup> *Dat Fundament des Christl. Leuens door M. S., quat. R, VII, 2.*

<sup>39</sup> *Alenson's Tegenbericht, B, R, N., VII, 236.*

<sup>40</sup> *Idem, 258.*

<sup>41</sup> *Idem, 258.*

Yet what a work Menno Simons had accomplished before he died! He started out with a handful of despised, persecuted Anabaptists; he left behind a mighty organization, loosely bound together, it is true, but still standing on a common platform, with common ideals; a band of men, which in 1561 had a mightier hold on the Lowlands than the Dutch Reformed Church. And to that end he had labored more than any of the other leaders, for he had greater influence and a larger following than any of them. He started with the Philips brothers, David Joris, Van Batenburg, and others, but soon they dropped by the roadside. When he died only Derck Philips was left as the coleader of the party which he had founded, and he had outstripped them all.

The principal works of Menno, found in his *Opera Omnia* of 1681, are these (I translate their titles):

1. "Christ the promised Son of David" (against John of Leyden).

2. "Of the spiritual resurrection."

3. "Of the new Creature."

4. "Of the right Christian faith."

The dates of these four are uncertain.

5. "The fundamental Book," 1539.

6. "Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm," 1539.

7. "On excommunication," 1540.

8. "Declaration to John à Lasco, about Christ's humanity," 1543.

9. "Explanation of Christian Baptism," 1543.

10. "The cause of M. S.'s teaching and writing" (?).

11. "Of the triune God," 1550.

12. "Answer to questions about the ban," 1550.

13. "Of the cross of Christ" (?).

14. "Supplication to the magistrates," 1552.

15. "A justification of the oppressed Christians, to the preachers," 1552.
16. "Confession about points in debate," 1552.
17. "Justification and defense against lies and accusations," 1553.
18. "Against Cellius Faber," 1554.
19. "About Christ's incarnation. Against John à Lasco," 1554.
20. "How a Christian is to be disposed, and of the Ban" (?).
21. "Answer to Martin Micron," 1556.
22. "Discourse on Excommunication," 1557.
23. "Of child-discipline" (?).
24. "Answer to Zylis and Lememken," 1559.

In his polemic he resembled his contemporaries; his mode of attack was often coarse and vicious. The epithets used in these debates stagger us, the children of a milder age, of a broader outlook, and of greater tolerance. In this respect Derck Philips far surpasses Menno; his controversial style is far more refined and almost entirely free from personalities, a thing which even his most lenient critic could not say of Menno.

I will not devote a separate paragraph to Leonard Bouwens, and the other secondary leaders of the Menonites, because we shall meet them again and again in the recital of the events which mark the development of the Anabaptist movement in the Lowlands. Suffice it to say that Bouwens was sent out, as a bishop, by Derck Philips and Menno Simons, together with Gielis van Aken, in 1553," at the request of the people."<sup>42</sup> Although very successful in his ministry, especially in the Lowlands, and among the Frisians, he was destined to be-

<sup>42</sup> B. R. N., X, 23.



come a thorn in the flesh of both Derck and Menno. We have seen already how he compelled Menno, by a threat of the ban, to abandon his mild policy in the matter of excommunication for one of extreme rigor. And he finally came into deadly conflict with Derck Philips, who, made of tougher fiber, scorned his threats and in turn excommunicated him. Gielis van Aken recanted, under torture, and was decapitated.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. *The Era of Schisms*

Public debates were the order of the day in the whole period of the Reformation. It seemed as if the *rabies disputandi* of the schools of the Middle Ages had been revived. Thus Lutherans debated with the Swiss and with the Catholics; the Swiss debated among themselves and in fact largely settled their reformation by the debates of Bern and Basel. Zwingli debated with the Anabaptists. The Dutch and German Anabaptists debated with the Reformed and the Lutherans, and they strenuously debated among themselves. After a fashion, their convictions *in re* certain dogmas, and also their views of life, were thus settled, but on the other hand the door was opened for endless schisms.

And the Dutch Protestants in general shared with the Anabaptists in this trait of disputatiousness and also in that of a decided schismatic tendency. How could it be otherwise? The mind, set free from the bondage of scholasticism and tradition, had to exercise its newly found liberty. Lutheran and Calvinist alike believed in the great principle of the "priesthood of all believers"; but nowhere was this principle so unduly exalted as among the Anabaptists. If the latter were zealous even unto fanaticism, no less so were some Protestants. Think of Martin

<sup>43</sup> B. R. N., VII, 520.

Micron, the friend and colaborer of Utenhove, in the Dutch church of London, now an exile for Christ's sake, a man small of stature but contentious to a degree, always aching for a debate, always urging some disputation, and of course always considering himself the victor.

By his disputatiousness, he succeeded in having the Reformed driven from Hamburg, where they had been in quiet safety before his arrival among them. The Wismar and Lübeck disputations were no more advantageous to the Reformed cause than that of Hamburg. Everywhere disaster followed his strenuous efforts, and yet he was ever ready to renew the attempt.

What may be the psychological ground for this contentious spirit? For to a certain degree it was common to all. Did they thus search for that certainty and fixedness of faith, which they had lost in leaving Rome?

And in all this animosity and contentiousness the Anabaptists were the common object of hatred of all, Protestants and Catholics alike.

Think of the incident, which happened at Wismar, in 1553. Hermes Backereel, to whom, in Micron's absence, the care of the church or rather of the group of Reformed exiles had been entrusted, insisted on a debate with Menno Simons. The Anabaptists informed him that Menno was not there, but they prevaricated, for Hermes had found out Menno's hiding-place from the prattle of an innocent child.<sup>44</sup> Menno then appeared and debated with Hermes, who broke his promise of secrecy and openly pointed out the place where Menno might be found. And this though he knew full well that the Lutheran preachers of Wismar deemed the death-penalty none too heavy for Anabaptists and incidentally for "Sacramentarians" (nickname for the Reformed) as well.

<sup>44</sup> *Myn verborgene woonstede van een onnozel kint wtvraechde.*

Debates at Haffnia, at Hamburg, at Lübeck, at Rostock, at Wismar, even though they all knew that the eye of the enemy was upon them and that their safety lay in keeping quietly under cover!

The Government frequently insisted on these debates between the Anabaptists and the Reformed, evidently in the hope of converting the former. Thus came off the Frankenthal disputation of 1571, by order of Frederick of the Palatinate, where Dathenus, the great Reformed Dutch field preacher, and Rauf debated with the Anabaptists. Again at Embden, in 1578, where the Reformed pastors debated with Peter van Ceulen and his associates; and again at Leeuwarden in Vriesland, in 1596, where Acronius defended the Reformed doctrine and Peter van Ceulen that of the Mennonites. Naturally all these efforts at union failed.

The Lutheran was as bitter against the Zwinglians and Calvinists and Anabaptists as he was against Rome, only more so. And the compliment was returned with avidity. Each thought and taught that he had found and founded the "true Church." The bitter spirit of exclusion and seclusion, which had characterized Judaism, revealed itself again among the children of the Reformation, and ages were to pass before the spirit of mutual toleration and appreciation, and better understanding and a broader, mellowed, and more clear-eyed spirit revealed itself.

It was an age of general intolerance, an intolerance which revealed itself at home and abroad. Let me cite a single example. In 1564, the Dutch Reformed church at London, founded under Edward VI, exiled under "Bloody Mary," and restored again by Elizabeth, had attained great prosperity. Yet so simple a question as an agitation about the procedure to be followed when an infant was presented for baptism—mind you not the

mode of baptism but simply the ecclesiastical procedure that went before—practically ruined the church. Cooltuyn, a pastor of the Embden church, was called in as arbitrator and spent half a year in trying to settle the matter. Yet no sooner had he returned to Embden, but the agitation broke out anew and nearly ruined the church.

We will not be amazed then if we find this spirit of contentiousness to abound among the followers of Menno Simons and Derck Philips.

How could it be otherwise? Nowhere individualism held such supreme sway as among the Anabaptists. Each man read the Scriptures for himself; other books being practically interdicted, except such as belonged to his own circle.

If it be true that the old Dutch Anabaptists had paid little attention to the Scriptures, and had placed their own visions and fanciful interpretations of the truth far above the simple words of Holy Writ, not so with the Mennonites.

They studied the Scriptures ardently, they knew them as few Protestants did; witness their quickness in repartee and especially the inexhaustible wealth of Scripture quotations, in the procès verbal of the examination of their martyrs, before the Inquisitorial tribunals.

Thus a sternness of opinion was created, which coupled with the native Dutch stubbornness and a firm conviction of duty, naturally and inevitably led to endless schisms. In the decades following the death of Menno Simons, the centrifugal force wholly preponderated over the centripetal among his followers.

Schisms had occurred even before his death; after it, they multiplied with amazing rapidity. No one can study these endless schisms among the Dutch Mennonites with-

out the assistance of Carel van Ghent's "Beginning of the Schisms" (*Beginsel der Scheuringen*).

Many of the followers of Menno had followed his example in trying to break entirely with the Münster party and in making themselves believe that their so-called "mission" had a different origin from that of the Münsterites.

This contention is mercilessly exposed by a document, originally printed in Latin and found as an addendum behind Carel's "Beginning," in the *Bibliotheca*:<sup>45</sup>

1. Jan Matthysz, a baker at Haarlem, simply ran on his own account. [He was baptized and ordained by Jan Trypmaker, the disciple and associate of Hoffman.—*H. E. D.*], and unjustly called himself "Elias," sent from God. He first sent, to Vriesland, Bartholomew Boekbinder and Dirk Kuyper, to preach and to baptize.

2. These, Bartholomew and Dirk, coming to Leeuwarden, there have baptized and ordained, with the laying on of hands and have sent out with apostolic power, to teach and to baptize, Ubbo Philips, John the Barber, and others.

3. Ubbo Philips thereupon, as appears from his Confession, has sent out in the same way Dirck Philips, his brother, Menno Simons, and many others.

4. Thereupon Derck Philips sent out, after the same manner, John Lubberts, Lubbert Gerrits, and many others.

5. Finally Lubbert Gerrits, when he was almost dying, among many others, after the laying on of hands, has sent out Gerrit Reynier Wybrants, who was then still living.

In this and no other way, or by no other means or authority, thereafter the sending out and ordination of ministers, among the Flemings and other Anabaptist sects, as many as there may be, has taken its origin. And thereafter the one sent out and ordained the other, up to the present day.

Now as to whether this so highly exalted ordination and mission of the aforesaid preachers actually is from heaven or from man, believers and spiritually minded men, who can distinguish things rightly and uprightly, may judge.

<sup>45</sup> B. R. N., VII, 558.

What is this "Commencement" (*Beginsel*) of Carel van Ghent? It is one of the chief (if not the chief) sources of information concerning the schisms among the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century. It was printed after the death of the author, and we do not know his true name. But internal evidence in the book itself seems to point conclusively to Carel van Ghent, who joined the Anabaptists as a young man of twenty-two years, in 1563, after he had studied for the Romish priesthood. He joined that group of Menno's followers who four years later were to split into two bodies—the Flemings and the Frisians. He was put under the ban in 1568. Later he was received again by the Flemings, and he was their clerk at the Embden disputation of 1578. Two years later, in 1580, he was "banned" again and thereafter sought reinstatement in vain. He then apparently became, like so many expelled Anabaptists, an ecclesiastical free-lance, a sort of pietistic mystic, without any church connection. But the entire contents of the book point him out as a naturally pious man.

If one doubts it, let him listen to the close of the book:<sup>46</sup>

Thus from the stress of my soul, I must henceforth, in my old age, by the gracious illumination of my Lord, turn to and accommodate myself to the internal rather than to the external, to the heavenly from the earthly, and from the soiled . . . signs, to what they truly and spiritually mean. And thus, without rejecting or despising any one, I must await with patience the gracious rest of my soul (death) and also the glorious appearance of Christ my Lord and God and the resurrection of those who belong to him.

The whole tone of the book, its bitterness to Protestantism in general, and its apologetic attitude for faults, which he

<sup>46</sup> B. R. N., VII, 494.



freely criticizes in the Anabaptist circles, prove that the author never lost his first love.

And this conviction increases our estimate of the historical value of his revelations concerning the schisms among the Anabaptists. No one can read the introduction to the book and mistake the author's standing. He died a loyal Anabaptist at heart. Sometimes he severely criticizes, as when he slashes away at the evil practises sometimes occurring in connection with the ban and avoidance. Says he,<sup>47</sup> "If it were necessary and profitable the author could name some who were snatched away from their excommunicated husbands without the latter being able to detect where they were taken.." And he writes these words not from hearsay, but from personal knowledge.

De Hoop Scheffer was at first suspicious of this book, but came to see differently later on. Dr. S. Cramer, on the other hand, "does not see why we should have to use greater circumspection here than that which every historian must exercise over against every informant." Dr. De Hoop Scheffer had spoken of bitter denunciations and hard accusations against the brotherhood, but Doctor Cramer denies this and proves conclusively that the author was at least as fair and open-minded in his strictures as were the best of his contemporaries.<sup>48</sup>

Rome brought this charge of dissent and of a general tendency to schism not only against the Anabaptists, but against all Protestant bodies, as she studied their internal development, when the break from Rome had become an accomplished fact.

Says Joannis Bunderius, the great Dominican antagonist of Anastasius Veluanus, whom I have quoted in an-

<sup>47</sup> B. R. N., VII, 501.

<sup>48</sup> B. R. N., VII, 502.

other lecture, whilst bitterly attacking the latter's "Laymans Guide" (*Lekenwechwyser*): <sup>49</sup>

When faith is one and the same, there should be mutual accord between the articles of faith, and no discord. The Catholic faith, received from Peter and Paul, till now has been preserved unpolluted and has not been weakened by internal dissensions. But your faith counts as many sects as there are heretical leaders.

In line with this, there is a biting criticism of V. P. in the *Successio Anabaptistica*, another valuable source for our knowledge of the schisms among the Anabaptists: <sup>50</sup>

They form an army against the Catholics, as the Midianites against Gideon; and when they plan to fight the enemy, they fall out among themselves, each man's sword is turned against his neighbor, and with biting and banning, scolding and quarrelling, they so destroy each other that from the village church they can scarcely fill a little loft of their own sect.

The main cause of the schisms in the early Church, during the great persecutions, from the Hippolitan schism of 217 A. D. till the Donatist schism of 311 A. D., was invariably the treatment of the *lapsi*; church discipline, therefore. And among the Anabaptists it was again the subject of discipline which formed the main cause of disruptions.

Discipline, the ban and its rigorous application in the case of married people, in avoidance, these were the three main reasons of all ruptures among them. We find, coupled with these, at a later period, the doctrine of the incarnation. As an accidental matter of difference, we find the various answers to the question, "What is a disciplinary offense?" The Flemings would answer, "All luxury, pride, ostentatiousness in dress, splendid house-furnishings, all these make one liable to discipline." The

<sup>49</sup> B. R. N., IV, 117.

<sup>50</sup> B. R. N., VII, 83.

Waterlandians would have none of all that, and they would answer, "Only Scriptural offenses are to be thus considered." And between these two groups we find also an intense difference as to the treatment of those under discipline. The first, true to their national, vehement character, especially where this was reenforced by the stern Frisian temperament, would have those under discipline to be treated as if they were dead, even in the family circle; no contact whatever was permitted in any conceivable way, no pity might be shown.

The Waterlandians, on the other hand, milder and broader from the start, only avoided particular intimacy, but for the rest they assumed a conciliatory attitude.

Let us try to obtain a coup d'oeil of the various groups among the followers of Menno, as they stood about the time of his death.

1. The Münster party was practically dead. It lived on only in a straggling way, as in the sect of the Batenburgers, whose leader, a thorough Münsterite, had died a martyr's death.

2. The Adam Pastorites still formed a considerable, though dwindling body along the upper Rhine.

3. The House of Love, followers of Hendrick Nikolaes, existed as scattered remnants here and there, whom we perhaps meet in the Dutch "Naked-runners" (*Naakt-loopers*).

4. The party of Sebastian Franck, negligible as a distinct Anabaptist development.

5. The Meerlanders were a small group about Aix la Chapelle, standing by themselves and distinguished by communism. They called themselves "The Dutch Congregation" (*De Nederlandsche Ghemeynte*).

All these are only of passing interest and have very little bearing on our subject.

6. The "Old Congregation." These were the followers of Menno Simons and Derck Philips and were known as the "Hard Banners," because they were rigid in the application of the ban.

7. The "New Congregation," who had been excommunicated by Menno and Derck and Leonard Bouwens, because they were unwilling to adopt the harsh measures proposed. They were known as the "Soft Banners," on account of their leniency; also the "Overland Church" or "Waterlandians," from their location.

8. The Frisians, mainly churches founded by Leonard Bouwens. It is with these Frisians and Flemings and Waterlandians, or the "New Congregation," that we are chiefly concerned, for from them in the main was to grow the body which till this day is known as the *Doopsgezinde Gemeente* (The Mennonite Church) in the Netherlands.

The first serious schism had occurred in 1555, as has been said, and it had resulted in the formation of the New Congregation. Their leaders were Joris Heins and Hendrick Naaldman; and Bouwens had viciously called them "The Garbage Cart" (*Dreckwaghen*), because they received in their membership people who had been "banned" by other Anabaptist sects. And yet they were destined to become the leaders of the Dutch Mennonites, though they were the earliest schismatics.

They adopted the following six points as a sort of church program:<sup>51</sup>

1. There can be no marriage in case one is under the sentence of the ban and avoidance. Even in case of adultery neither the guilty nor innocent can be married again.

2. Christ took his human nature from heaven.

3. No Christian may bear the sword.

<sup>51</sup> B. R. N., VII, 466, 467, 524.

4. No Christian may seek justice in the civil courts.

5. Christ died only for Adam's, i. e., for original, sin, not for our later sins.

6. Christ reigns on this earth, since his resurrection, with his own people, till he deliver the kingdom to his Father.

These points were not in the nature of a confession of faith, but only the loosest possible basis of agreement.

In 1559 the separation occurred between the Mennonites and the followers of Zyles and Lemke. The latter desired a moderate application of the Wismar articles of 1554, which would permit contact with those who were banned "in case of necessity."<sup>52</sup> And they also wanted to modify the law of avoidance in case of conscientious scruples. The Zyles-Lemke party were now excommunicated and thus the Germans separated from the Dutch Mennonites.<sup>53</sup>

But a more serious danger threatened in 1565; so serious in fact that it shook the brotherhood to its very foundations.

Four cities in Vriesland—Leeuwarden, Dokkum, Franeker, and Harlingen—had formed a sort of alliance among their Mennonite congregations. It had regard partly to the maintenance of the services of their churches and also those of certain villages and islands; and partly to some merely domestic arrangements. But some of the stricter constructionists of Mennonite practise saw in this move the violation of a fundamental principle. They claimed that the Scriptures were a sufficient covenant, and that beyond them nothing was needed or permitted.<sup>54</sup>

Here was the foundation of all the trouble that followed.

<sup>52</sup> B. R. N., VII, 52.

<sup>53</sup> *Idem*, 56, 527.

<sup>54</sup> *Idem*, 536.

But there was another and a more subtle cause of friction. Leonard Bouwens, the popular founder of most of the Frisian churches, had been put under the ban and had been deposed from his ministry, in this same year 1565, by Derck Philips and six other pastors "for some great sin." What was the nature of the offense is wholly unknown. None of the ancient sources throws a ray of light on the mystery. His frequent and prolonged absences from his charge at Embden had caused great dissatisfaction there. But this was not the cause of his deposition. Whatever it was, his judges were merciful and kept the cause of their harsh sentence entirely secret, and whatever the cause, it was serious enough to prohibit him, self-willed as he was, from defying the sentence. He passed from thenceforth out of the ministry of the Mennonite churches.

But he was deeply angry and terribly wounded by this humiliation. Being an imperious and impulsive man, and exercising a tremendous influence in Vriesland, where he had thousands of converts, he was a dangerous foe for his old friend and bishop, who had ordained him to the ministry. And Derck Philips was destined to feel the weight of his displeasure.

Was he the ultimate cause of the great schism? Who can tell us?

It is a significant fact that Bouwens, on leaving Embden, had moved to Vriesland and had settled down in the country near Harlingen, where he nursed his grievances in silence. And it is still more significant that Ebbe Pieters, the Mennonite pastor of Harlingen and the special object of the antagonism of Jeroen Tinnegieter, the leader of the schismatics, was one of the seven judges who had deposed Bouwens.

Let us look for a moment at this Franeker dispute,



in which Tinnegieter figured, and which led to all the trouble.

During the severe persecution in the South many Flemish Anabaptists had migrated to Vriesland, where the placards were less strenuously enforced, and had joined the brotherhood there. From the start there was some friction between the two nationalities. The Frisians were neater and more elaborate in their domestic arrangements; while the Flemish dressed more ostentatiously abroad and were less particular at home. Some mutual recriminations were indulged in and thus the seed was sown for dissension. There was some dispute about attending the funerals of "outsiders." Jeroen Tinnegieter, the teacher of the Flemish Anabaptists at Franeker, had serious grievances against Ebbe Pieters, the pastor at Harlingen. In the spring of 1556, he called a meeting at night. There was some discussion about the covenant between the four cities, and six of the members of the consistory insisted on maintaining it. Jeroen and his followers summarily suspended them from their office. Ebbe heard of it the next day, on his way to Leeuwarden, where he spread the news. The Flemish now accused him of lying and of creating discord and demanded his appearance for a hearing. Ebbe appeared and Hoyte Reynix of Bolsward was present as judge (with a few other pastors), who however had received no mandate from his church to act in that capacity. Forty people attended the meeting and, with a vote of twenty-five against fifteen, declared Ebbe innocent. Jeroen was absent at the time, but on his return, demanded a rehearing of the case and accused Ebbe before his own church at Harlingen. A meeting for this purpose was called by a certain Michael Jans, who sided with the Flemish, for August 7, 1566. Of the four hundred members of the

church only thirty appeared; but these thirty banned and deposed Ebbe. The followers of Ebbe did not accept this ridiculous sentence, and they retaliated by banning members of the other party, both at Harlingen and Franeker. The thing, originally a farce, now developed into a struggle between the defenders and the opponents of the "covenant between the four cities."

When the strife increased, Derck Philips wrote his famous epistle anent the "Covenant,"<sup>55</sup> to which was added an official document, signed by all the pastors who had deposed Bouwens. Why this addendum to his letter, if Bouwens was not suspected of fomenting the strife in Vriesland? The letter was very conciliatory and admonished to brotherly love and forbearance. It specially emphasized the relations between church and pastor. God, he told them, called pastors, the church ordained them, and each church was entitled to the services of its own pastor. Here again was a palpable reminder of the offense Bouwens had given at Embden by his repeated absences. One feels all the time in reading the letter that Derck keeps Bouwens continually in mind.

But the epistle failed of its purpose and the dissension grew apace. De Hoop Scheffer has clearly shown that the great increase in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands synchronizes with the bitter schisms, which started among the Mennonites, in 1566. It was so in Harlingen and in other places in Vriesland.<sup>56</sup>

The Flemish decided to put the six elders, mentioned above, under the ban and thus to confirm their original sentence, but they did not immediately act on this decision; when suddenly a perfect ban-storm broke out all over. It was rather a brain-storm and it threatened to

<sup>55</sup> B. R. N., X, 517 p.

<sup>56</sup> *Het Verbond der Vier Steden*, 1893.

consume the entire brotherhood, as with fire. In their utter distraction, a mutual attempt was made to patch up some sort of peace. Both parties to the controversy agreed to call in two pastors of the church of Hoorn, in North Holland, Jan Willems and Lubbert Gerrits, as arbitrators. They came, investigated the matter and pronounced their verdict at Harlingen, in the presence of both parties. Both were decided to have been at fault, and they were mutually to confess their guilt and to make a permanent peace. They were to do so kneeling. The Frisians made confession and rose from the floor; the Flemish followed suit; but as they were about to rise, they were told that they must remain kneeling, till they were assisted to rise, inasmuch as they had been the aggressors.

Knowing that this meant, according to Anabaptist custom, that thereafter not one of them would be eligible to office, they arose as one man, and repudiated their confession. This was in 1567. The only exception was that of Michael Jans, mentioned above, who had announced to Ebbe Pieters the sentence of the ban. The next day he exclaimed, with a flood of tears, to Carel van Ghent:<sup>57</sup>

O God, have we poor people allowed ourselves to be deluded, in our search of the Scriptures, running after trouble and dissent, and not after peace, love, and unity! O God, give me grace that I may be redeemed from this amazing madness and may live for half a year in a quiet and peaceful place. Then I will gladly sacrifice my body for my faith.

His prayer was heard; he moved to a village near Brielle, and died a martyr within the year.

Nearly all the churches in Groningen, Embden, East Frisia, Brabant, and Flanders now took the side of the Flemish, and Derck Philips demanded that the Frisians

<sup>57</sup> B. R. N., VII, 542.

and the arbitrators of the quarrel appear before him, at Embden, to have the matter adjudicated. As they refused to come they were all "banned" by the Embden church, and the Flemish were adjudged to be in the right in the quarrel. The latter now began to rebaptize Frisians who joined them. They followed the example set them by those of Embden and decided (I quote literally) :

To pronounce a general and universal ban, with the strong effect and corollary thereof, namely avoidance of all Frisian Anabaptists, of whatever kind they may be, men, women, and children, servants, maids, old and young, educated or uneducated, guilty or guiltless.

It sounds almost like a papal ban, and it seems to us a psychological riddle that men could ever be carried away by a blind passion, as these were. And yet, I am sure, they thought they were doing God service. A few members of both parties made peace, in 1574, at Homsterland, in the province of Groningen. From the place where the compromise was made, it is called the "Homster Peace." But the peacemakers were repudiated by both parties, and thus but added another to the long list of Anabaptist sects in the sixteenth century.

Four years later, this "Homster Peace" became the subject of a debate at Embden, whether to cancel or extend it. Alas, the majority decided for cancellation! Pieter van Ceulen now leaped into the limelight, as a defender of the peace-party. The Embden pastors then formally decided to visit Groningen and to settle the matter *in situ*, with the astonishing result that they resolved to perpetuate the break between the Flemish and the Frisians. The schism now became a public scandal.

Another effort at pacification was made at Hoorn in 1576, but it proved a lamentable failure; for the Flemish,

on account of their former experience, resisted all efforts at conciliation with the utmost stubbornness.

Derck Philips, one of the founders of the Church, nay with Menno the chief founder, was now put under the ban by his opponents; and replied to this action by an "Appendix to Our Little Book on the Dissension" (*Appendix aen ons boecsken van den Twistigen Handel*). In the letter, accompanying the ban, names and places had been given in full; and of that act, as a betrayal of the brethren so named, Derck bitterly complains;<sup>58</sup> of the epistle itself he says, "a more abominably slanderous epistle we have not seen nor read in our lifetime."

One of the Flemish delegates to this meeting was Jan van Ophoorn, pastor of the Flemish church at Embden, who had imagined to see in the proposals for reconciliation at Hoorn "all manner of snares and pitfalls, prepared for them by their opponents." Later on, in an access of schismatic fury, he separated from his own party, as having departed from the truth. Unable to start a new sect, and believing himself and wife the only believers left, he founded a church at his house between them, remembering the Master's "where two or three." He then solemnly proceeded to place all the Flemish pastors under the ban. Poor and forlorn and lonely he died at Norden.<sup>59</sup>

This great schism did not prevent several smaller ones from budding and springing into a more or less vigorous life.

Thus the sale of a house at Franeker, apparently a somewhat questionable transaction, led in 1586, to the forming of the sect of the "Housebuyers" (*Huiscopers*), who were led by Thomas Bintgens, and opposed by J. K., whom Dr. S. Cramer identifies with the celebrated Jaques

<sup>58</sup> B. R. N., X, 589, p.

<sup>59</sup> B. R. N., VII, 70.

Outerman, whose followers continued to call themselves Flemish. Thus we have two new sects, the "Anti-house-buyers" as well as the "Housebuyers."<sup>60</sup>

At Dantzig meanwhile another little group had seceded, when its pastor, Quyryn vander Meulen, had been banned by Hans de Wever and Jacob van der Meulen. Says the *Successio Anabaptistica*:<sup>61</sup>

These have so troubled the aforesaid heads with disputing, arguing, and the allegation of many Scriptures, that they saw no way to defend their opinion; and as it is the nature of pride rather to fall into the abyss of hell than to turn toward love, with abnegation of self, they remained obstinate, as Hans and Vermoelen saw it, and therefore were banned by them.

They are known in Anabaptist history as the "Concerned Ones" (*Bekommerden*).

This same Jacob van der Meulen figures in another schism, whereby the Housebuyers were split again, in 1598, by the expulsion of the so-called "Bankrupt Party" (*Bancquerottiers*), at Haarlem. The trouble arose through the bankruptcy of one of the members of the church,<sup>62</sup> for and against the excommunication of whom the members ranged themselves in two parties. Let me omit further tiresome details. Enough has been said to show that no division of Protestantism sinned as grievously through schismatic contentions as did the Anabaptists. Somehow, in studying their history, one is ever reminded of the frequently recurring statement in the book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Meanwhile the Frisians had split among themselves again into "Young" or "Soft" and "Old" or "Hard"

<sup>60</sup> B. R. N., VII, 70, 554.

<sup>61</sup> B. R. N., VII, 70.

<sup>62</sup> B. R. N., VII, 555.



Frisians. The Germans made a peace-pact with the former in 1591, and in 1601 the Waterlandians joined this new group, alas, only to separate from them again in 1613, in Holland, Vriesland, and elsewhere. The centripetal force was not yet ready to assert itself.

How bitter was the antagonism, as late as 1613, appears from the thirty-three articles, printed with the new Martyrs' Book, in that year, against which Alenson wrote his "Apology" (*Tegenbericht*). The spirit of criticism and of depreciation of the opponent party displayed in them is very offensive.<sup>63</sup>

And in judging of this matter, let us not forget that they who edited this book and who wrote these articles were the liberals of their day among the Mennonites. And yet, even when they tried to be conciliatory, they could not resist the temptation to mingle a little gall with the cup of peace, they poured out.

It was after all but a struggle between two great principles, between the rigorists and the moderates, between implacable justice and divine mercy. And though they knew it not, it touched the vital point of their whole church polity, absolute individualism in all congregational matters. The later Congregational polity is built on the original Anabaptist doctrine. A council might carry some weight, its advice might be good or bad, but it had no final jurisdiction, no absolute authority. The local church alone possessed this power. Individualism was the *vitium originis* of the whole Anabaptist movement, and it limited its possibilities for the future; while its very constitution made the endless disruptions of which I have been speaking a foregone conclusion. Granted a heterogeneous aggregate, made up of many different nationalities, each with its own peculiar idiosyncrasies, with-

<sup>63</sup> B. R. N., VII, 218.

out any central organization or controlling power, like that which constituted the Anabaptist movement, and the wonder is not that they split up into so many parties, but rather that two of them remained together.

These endless schisms were like a heavy cloud, resting on the last days of Derck Philips. He was not a perfect man; who is? But he was, not even barring Menno Simons, the greatest leader of the early Dutch Anabaptists. Complaining of the treatment he received at the hands of the Frisian zealots and their Hoorn confederates, he said: <sup>64</sup>

So much we have not been able to obtain, that they would answer for themselves before their accusers and those who had laid charges against them. So much of fairness, modesty, yea of the fear of the Lord or of Christ's spirit and brotherly love, was not found among them.

All this was strictly true. But what could Derck Philips expect? He had back of him no organization which authorized him to assume arch-episcopal powers. The Waterlandians and those of the opposition party were not obliged by any law in vogue among the Anabaptists to come to him. He could "ban" them, and so he did; but they in turn could "ban" him, and so they did. The schisms among the Anabaptists were the necessary outcome of the very thing which the founders had inaugurated, the absolute liberty and independence of the individual church.

### 5. *The Martyrs*

While all these things were happening, while the radical Anabaptist development ran its swift and destructive course, ending in the annihilation of the faction comprised

<sup>64</sup> *Cort Verhael*, B. R. N., X, 556.

under it; and while all the disheartening schisms and separations were developing among the conservative wing of the Anabaptists, death was ceaselessly swinging his scythe among them in the form of countless martyrdoms.

Remember they were hated of all mankind; their name had been given by Rome, in the Netherlands, to all heretics without distinction; and among them the bitter spirit of persecution reaped its richest harvest.

Doctor Fruin must have had Schyn's work before him when he wrote his wonderful book on the war of Liberty,<sup>65</sup> else I am unable to understand the following quotation:<sup>66</sup>

Next to the calm Lutherans, the fanatical Anabaptists arose. In them the multiform heresies of the Middle Ages revived and the antagonism against the clergy which once had animated the Hussites. They carried back their genealogical tree to the first Middle Ages. [The early Anabaptists never did.—*H. E. D.*] The troubles caused by Luther did not originate them, but only drew them into the open. As a running fire they spread all over the Lowlands and soon assimilated the most zealous of the Protestants, who now found no satisfaction any longer for their zeal in Lutheranism. For a time they threatened to gain the upper hand, but they were not capable of founding a lasting church. Unanimous in their destructive spirit, but of many varieties of doctrine and of greatly divergent aims, they were only capable of breaking down, etc.

If this be an estimate of a liberal modern historian, what must have been that of their contemporaries?

We are assured by a number of creditable witnesses that even in the opening years of the seventeenth century Rome held a majority of the inhabitants of the Lowlands. During the persecutions, the heretical portion of the population was but a fraction of the whole. They were literally like sheep amid wolves. Inasmuch as they departed

<sup>65</sup> *Tien Jaren.*

<sup>66</sup> *Tien Jaren*, 238.

furthest from Rome in their simple services, the Anabaptists were the special objects of persecution. The Münster tragedy had seriously affected the progress of the Reformation in the Lowlands. Thus in Deventer, where two years earlier a remarkable reformatory spirit revealed itself, in 1534 and 1535, the strongest measures were taken against Lutheranism.<sup>67</sup> Ypey and Dermout tell us :

During this whole period, in most of the Lowlands, the spirit of the abyss so shockingly revealed itself, that it must raise the hair on one's head. Everywhere places of execution, where people were incessantly decapitated, strangled, and burned. Everywhere pits were pointed out, which were desecrated by the inhuman homicidal mania of the heresy hunters, who gnashed their teeth. . . In 1539, at Delft alone, thirty-nine Mennonites were executed; in 1543, at Louvain alone, between twenty and thirty, also Mennonites.

The relative number of their martyrdoms to that of the Reformed stands ten to one.<sup>68</sup> In Vriesland it was forbidden, on a fine of one hundred guilders, to rent house or land to Anabaptists. No one was permitted to intercede for them in any way, when they were condemned to die, by fire or sword. All who betrayed them received one-third of their possessions. Whatever belonged to an Anabaptist, even if given in sacred trust, was to be delivered at once to the authorities. All Anabaptists, even though they repented, were to be executed. All unbaptized children were at once to be baptized, and the names of their parents were to be given to the bishop of Leeuwarden and also to the clergy of the other provinces.<sup>69</sup>

As a sample of the cruelty of the imprisonment of the period, I relate the following. Mattheus Biernaert was

<sup>67</sup> Y. and D., *Gesch. d. N. H. K.*, I, 132.

<sup>68</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 88.

<sup>69</sup> Idem, 94.

imprisoned at Ghent for several months, in a cell so dark that he saw neither sun nor daylight. All the light the prisoner had was an occasional piece of candle obtained from those on the floor above. He was confined in a cellarlike dungeon, so small that he could only lie in a curled-up position, and if he wanted to stretch his legs, he had to sit up against the wall. The hole was so full of rodents that he had to keep his food in his hand when he said his prayers; for when he put it down it was gone at once. Says the chronicler,<sup>70</sup> "After such cruel imprisonment, besides enduring all kinds of admonitions and tortures, he was condemned to death and thus confirmed his testament with his blood."

The persecution had begun in dead earnest in 1535, but it increased in intensity between 1540 and 1546, on account of the rebellion of Ghent against Charles V. But from that date it began again to lessen its fury. Five years later, however, the placards of 1550 fanned the flames into a fresh blaze, and thousands of Protestants, mostly Mennonites, went into voluntary exile, largely to Embden, Wesel, or England.

When Philip II succeeded his father, October 25, 1555, the final struggle began, which led in 1566 to the celebrated "request" of the Dutch nobles, which is the real beginning of the Dutch war of liberty. In the same year the great storm of iconoclasm burst over the Netherlands, starting at Houtschoten, near Ypres, and spreading with inconceivable rapidity over all the Lowlands. Scarcely a church remained untouched; everywhere images of Mary and of the saints were ruthlessly destroyed.

Margareth wavered before the blast, but King Philip answered it by changing the government and by issuing a blanket condemnation to death of every Dutchman, a

<sup>70</sup> B. R. N., VII, 159.

few excepted by name, and by the introduction of the Spanish Inquisition. The notorious duke of Alva was entrusted with the execution of the royal decree and arrived in the Netherlands in 1567. Death stalked at his heels.

The scene that now opens baffles description. I have neither time nor space to describe that most heroic of all wars, in which a handful of brave and determined men, led by William I of Orange, the Dutch Washington, fought for their liberty and kept up the unequal struggle with Spain, the Germany of the sixteenth century, till the war, of which the time element was virtually lost, ended in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, after it had lasted for eighty years, or since 1568.

Doctor Cramer puts the number of Dutch martyrs at two thousand, of whom, he says, three-quarters were Anabaptists.<sup>71</sup> Where he gets this low figure I do not know, but the number certainly was enormously larger.

Alva was regent from 1567 till 1573. Say Ypey and Dermout:<sup>72</sup>

It is said that he then [when he left] gloried in the fact that, in six years' time, either as rebels against the king or as heretics, he had caused to be killed 18,600 people. This was almost a fifth part of all who then for the space of fifty years, for the same reason, had been killed in the Lowlands by the hand of the executioner.

Wagenaar is more circumstantial and even mentions the name of the man to whom Alva had boasted of his cruelty. It was Louis of Koningstein, an uncle (and enemy) of William of Orange, on his mother's side.<sup>73</sup>

The whole literature of the period is a mute witness to this carnival of blood; and of this bitter cup the Ana-

<sup>71</sup> *Intr.*, B. R. N.

<sup>72</sup> *Gesch. d. N. H. K.*, I, 234.

<sup>73</sup> *Vad. Hist.*, VI, 457.



baptists drank to the very dregs. But they were undismayed, their enemies even being witnesses to their exemplary lives. They had long since gone beyond the doctrine of resistance and physical force: that page in their history was sealed forever. And their blood was then, as always, the seed of the church.

When the martyrs at the stake sang their swan-song, as they frequently did, hundreds of voices in the dense multitude which witnessed the execution, at once joined in the song of the martyrs, in spite of their enemies around them and of the enraged magistrates who had pronounced the sentence.<sup>74</sup>

And from this period we have that wonderful martyr story, "The Sacrifice of the Lord" (*Het Offer des Heeren*), reprinted *in toto* in the second volume of the *Bibliotheca*.

It was originally printed in a small compact form, possible only, as Doctor Cramer tells us, by the wonderful paper and still more wonderful printing and binding of that age. How popular it was is plain from the fact that between 1566 and 1599 we have at least eleven separate editions of the book. As a matter of course it was placed by Rome on the Index.<sup>75</sup> To be found in possession of the book meant a speedy trip to the scaffold. Read the "Sacrifice," and it places you in a new world.

These are not the Anabaptists we have met before. Gone is their fanaticism; gone the memory of Münster; gone the heresies of some of their leaders; gone their endless internecine quarrels and schisms.

The book is a revelation. Here we see a faith that overcomes the world. The book was written "for the comfort and strengthening of the slaughter-lambs of

<sup>74</sup> Y. and D., *Gesch. d. N. H. K.*, I, 173.

<sup>75</sup> B. R. N., II, 6.

Christ," both for the martyrs who died and for the loved ones who were to mourn them. It was a book for edification: to be read, yes, but rather to be pondered and prayed over.

Rome, its fear, its obnoxious doctrines and ritual, all that lies far behind, that is the "world" which persecutes them. As for them, they are translated even now, they are going home, into a new and ever safe life.<sup>76</sup>

Hysterical, you say, narrow-minded; well, call it so. But oh, the deep conviction of the truth, the deathless faith of these men and women! And this faith scintillates in all these pages, none excepted. They were God's children, were these Anabaptist martyrs.

We have a clear picture of their spiritual exaltation in the conclusion of the "Sacrifice":<sup>77</sup>

Kind reader, here you have many examples of men and women who, with a faithful and pure heart, have feared God from their innermost soul. Their hearts flourished in the word and love of God; their lips overflowed with power, spirit, and wisdom; their life and death were Christ Jesus. They did not seek their kingdom and rest in this world, for their mind was heavenly and spiritual, as is evident from their posthumous writings. Beloved reader, mark the difference, namely, what is the way of the Lord and what the way of the devil; and which is the upright service of God and the service of the devil and of idols; and who are the children of God and the children of the devil; and who are the persecutors and the persecuted?

Thus you may understand what kind of people they are, from what father they are born, what spirit has moved them, who have rejected, plundered, belied, caught, tortured, broken, drowned, strangled, and murdered these loving, peaceful, innocent, obedient children of God in so unmerciful a fashion. Some they have strangled on stakes and hanged on gallows; some they have executed with the sword and given as food to the birds of the air; some they have cast to the fishes. And this

<sup>76</sup> B. R. N., II, 31.

<sup>77</sup> B. R. N., II, 615, 616.

tyranny, as would appear from the tenor of the Scriptures, will not cease till the rejected, strangled, and crucified Christ Jesus, with all his saints, will come at the last day, in the clouds of heaven, as an all-mighty potentate, conqueror, and glorious king, with the angels of his power and flames of fire; and will be glorified in his saints and will wonderfully appear in all believers, in the resurrection and in the revelation of heavenly glory, with which they shall be clothed, by the power of Christ; in order that, in that perfect state, they may possess and obtain the eternal and imperishable glory, world without end. Amen.

That was the prevalent attitude of the Anabaptist martyrs. Divided in life from the Reformed martyrs, they were united with them in a triumphant death.

### 6. *Condition under the Nascent Republic*

As the wave of persecution receded, the Dutch Republic was born; and after a long bitter night, the slow dawn came for the followers of Menno, purified as by fire. Long since their value as citizens had been recognized by the new government. The long and cruel memory of the Münster tragedy was slowly fading out. But danger threatened from a new quarter.

The Reformed Church had been the source of the Republic; it had not been created by it, it had created it. And thus was born an age-long struggle for the mastery between the Church and the State. One needs only to be familiar with the Arminian controversy, to know how strong was the tension between the leaders in the Church and the leaders in the State. The Roman Catholics, although they still held a majority of the inhabitants of the Lowlands, in the early years of the seventeenth century, were merely a *religio licita*. Fruin tells us:<sup>78</sup>

In a conference of preachers and deputies of the States, the president says that, in Holland, no public exercise of any other

<sup>78</sup> Fruin, quoting Bor.; II, 976; *Tien Jaren*, 238.

religion is permitted than of the Reformed only. Which may be considered a great benefit, in view of the many and different opinions which exist, so that there is not a tenth part of the inhabitants of the country which belongs to the Reformed faith.

The ideas of the time demanded a State Church, and since the adherents of Calvinism had been the founders of the State, naturally the Reformed Church came to be that of the State. "The firmness of their convictions; their unshaken faith in the divinity of their cause, their unconquerable courage and persistency, assured to their Church the front rank and the government."<sup>79</sup> Says Bakhuizen Van den Brink,<sup>80</sup> himself a liberal and an antagonist of Calvinism, "A reformatory struggle, which came so late after the origin of the Reformation as took place among us, could be nothing but Calvinistic and in favor of Calvinism." But the fact remained that in 1587, it could be said, without fear of contradiction, that the Reformed did not constitute more than a tenth part of the population.

There is little doubt that the Mennonites at that time were numerically stronger than they. But the former, as we have seen, were hopelessly disorganized, everywhere broken by schisms, without a central government, and without the necessary principle of cohesion. And thus like the Jews and the Catholics they were barely tolerated. Moreover, toward the close of the sixteenth century, the Reformed Church made terrible inroads on their numbers, and by hundreds they joined the State Church. Fruin is correct when he denies to the Anabaptists constructive ability; "of many doctrines and of the most divergent aims, they were able to break down only."<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Idem, 238.

<sup>80</sup> *Het huwelyk van Willem van Oranje met Anna van Saxon*, 123.

<sup>81</sup> Fruin, *Tien Jaren*, 240.

In the first meeting of the States General, it was resolved: <sup>82</sup>

That there shall be liberty of religion and that every man shall exercise the same in public, in church or chapel, as it shall please the government, without any one being troubled therein. And further that the clergy shall remain in their condition, without being attacked.

But, in the end, this liberty was curtailed, and the Reformed Church became the religion of the State. When, in 1575, Prince William I was made stadholder, it was demanded of him that he "uphold the Reformed religion." Fortunately it was also ordered "that no one shall be persecuted on account of his faith." <sup>83</sup>

Was this stipulation kept as regards the *Dooptgezinden* or Mennonites? I am afraid the answer must be negative. These men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were too near to Rome as yet, had too much of the old leaven of intolerance in their veins to have an absolute conception of religious liberty in the true sense.

As late as 1577, a persecution against the Anabaptists was organized at Middelburg in Zeeland, under the influence it is said of the Reformed Church, but it was nipped in the bud by the larger-hearted, broader-minded leader, Prince William I of Orange. Wagenaar tells the story in detail and gives us the full text of the letter, which the "Father of his Country" wrote to the magistrates of Middelburg. He tells them that the rumor of that persecution had become confirmed by the testimony of eye-witnesses. The *Dooptgezinden* had been prohibited from opening their shops or doing their work, on the ground that they were unwilling to take the oath of

<sup>82</sup> Idem, 241.

<sup>83</sup> Idem, 243; Bor. I, 643.

citizenship. Also that they were ill-treated because they were unwilling to perform the usual military service. The Anabaptists were willing to pay in money what would be an equivalent for the service performed, but the city fathers refused, and the thing became quite a scandal. The Prince's letter is as direct as he could make it, and he lays down the order peremptorily that the persecution must cease. Says he: <sup>84</sup>

Therefore it seems to us that you do very wrong in not permitting them to live in peace and quietude, according to the dictates of their mind and conscience, agreeable to the letter, which we granted them on a former occasion, with the approval of the governor and council, and which they presented to you, as they declare. As we perceive that you have been hitherto unwilling to mind it, and also the letter going before, therefore we are now compelled for the last time to draw up an ordinance, in which we publicly declare to you that it does not pertain to you to oppress the conscience of any one, when nothing is done which would tend to the harm of another, in which case we would not respect or tolerate any man. Therefore we command and specially enjoin you that hereafter you cease from oppressing the aforesaid people, namely the Doopsgezinden, or hinder them from pursuing their trades or business, in order to make a living for wife and children; but that you permit them to open their shops and work at their trades, as they formerly did, till such time at least as it shall be otherwise ordained, by the States General, to whom it appertains. See to it therefore that you undertake nothing contrary to this ordinance which we have granted them, and take no fines from them for the above-mentioned reasons as long as they undertake nothing that tends to the prejudice of any man, and besides bear all civil and lawful burdens along with the other citizens.

As we shall see later, there was a very good reason why William I should feel kindly toward the Anabaptists. But all the good-will of the supreme government not-

<sup>84</sup> Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, VII, 211.



withstanding, the bitter spirit of antagonism against them continued. It had been bred in the bone of the national consciousness so long that it proved a hard matter to eradicate the evil.

Especially in the Northern provinces, where the Anabaptists had been specially numerous, the fire broke out again and again, as we shall see. Thus in 1601 there was a keen revival of the old antagonistic spirit in Groningen, where several edicts, really in violation of the fundamental law of the land, were promulgated against the Anabaptists.

1. An attempt was to be made to convert them forcibly to the State Church.

2. Their property must be inventoried, so as to enable the magistrates to levy the supertax for non-conformity.

3. No person was to harbor Anabaptists or suffer their meetings on his premises.

4. All unbaptized children were excluded from being heirs at law of any property.

5. All Anabaptist preachers must be licensed by the civil authority.

6. The refusal to bear arms was to be considered as a dangerous political heresy.

7. The public exercise of all religions, but the Reformed, was prohibited.<sup>85</sup>

Fortunately all similar laws fell of their own weight. They were slightly behind the times in the new Republic.

Wagenaar tells us that Prince William I had a soft spot in his heart for the *Dooptgezinden*, because as early as 1572, some of them had furnished him with a goodly sum of money for his army.<sup>86</sup>

In 1578, they were permitted to meet in public at Am-

<sup>85</sup> Benedict, H. o. B., 113.

<sup>86</sup> Brandt, Ref., I, 525; Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, 212.

sterdam;<sup>87</sup> by degrees they obtained more liberty and, as the new century advanced, they grew stronger and better organized and began to occupy a more influential position in the land where they had suffered so deeply and so long.

<sup>87</sup> Wagenaar, *Vad. Hist.*, 209.

## IV

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE DUTCH ANABAPTISTS

THE subject before us is intensely interesting, and only now, with the *Bibliotheca* before us, it is possible to form a somewhat definite conception as to what the Dutch Anabaptists really believed and what was their theological position in distinction from the rest of the Protestant world.

All this was possible before, as a matter of course, for the chosen few who had access to the scattered documents left by the Anabaptist leaders. Now, with the *Bibliotheca* before us, the field is open to all; we now have an opportunity to compare the casual references to Anabaptist theology, in the Inquisitorial examinations of the martyrs, with what Menno Simons teaches in his *Opera Omnia* and with the theological writings of Adam Pastor and Sebastian Franck, and especially with the clear and unequivocal statements of Derck Philips who, more than any other Anabaptist, deserves the name theologian.

And thus we can obtain a comparatively unobstructed view of what they believed concerning the Scriptures, the Trinity, the doctrine of Christ, original sin, the doctrine of grace and free will, the sacraments, especially baptism, the ban, and the world to come.

It would take a large volume to work out all these points in detail. To some of them we will therefore only devote a few paragraphs, while others, like the doctrines of the Trinity, of Christ, and of the Sacraments, demand a more extensive treatment.

### 1. *Their Theology in General*

At the start let me say, that character and creed, belief and conduct, doctrine and duty cannot be separated. It has been tried by the moderns, but ends in a lamentable failure.

After all, a man is what he believes. Doctrine and life are the two inseparable hemispheres of one and the same sphere. Faith and conduct, if there be true and deep faith, always go hand in hand. There never was a duty which ultimately is not based on faith. If the faith be right, the duty will be clear and definite; if it be shadowy and weak, the duty will be cloudy and ill defined.

Now the Anabaptists from the beginning separated themselves widely from the tenets of the old Catholic Church, and from the common Protestant faith as well. They accepted the "formal principle" of the Reformation, i. e., the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures. But they differed widely from the Reformers in their interpretation of the great truths of the gospel; and this difference is equally noticeable between the left and the right wings of the Anabaptist movement. All Anabaptists lacked authority in matters of faith.

Even among the Erasmian group of authors, who were all bitterly hostile to the Anabaptists, at least most of them, we find this lack of authority. Veluanus claims we are to rely on the Scriptures and on them alone. "All idolatry must be utterly destroyed; the whole work of the mass, with its altars, images, garments, and, all its heathenish ceremonies, should be removed from the eyes of the people."

Well and good; but who is to tell us what the Bible demands? Are we not compelled to fall back on the clergy? By no means. Hear!

The understanding of the Sacred Scriptures should always remain with the clergy, but this does not always happen. Their right understanding sometimes remains longer with the lowest members than with the highest (clergy). Sometimes the whole understanding moves from the clergy to the laity.<sup>1</sup>

And that was precisely the position taken by the Anabaptists. Individualism, from the beginning, was the *bête noire* of their existence. Derck Philips wants<sup>2</sup> every man to test the truth of what he has spoken or written,

with the touchstone of the Holy Scriptures. . . And let him keep watch over the teacher whom he finds and knows to be false, let him not hear him but depart from him. . . After the same fashion the Holy Scriptures forbid us to hear false teachers; and this is the idea, that we shall not go to the false teachers in the house of idols, when they stand in the school of pestilence and falsify the word of God, neither shall we listen to their words nor believe them.

This was strong language and threw the burden of decision on the individual conscience. The Anabaptists followed the advice of Derck Philips; they learned their lesson, but they learned it too well; for they applied it to their own men as well as to the Roman Catholic clergy. They heard, disapproved, and separated.

One and all they believed in salvation through Christ, but they glorified the Christian life. And this stress laid on Christian living, by Philips and all their other teachers, is due to the legalistic character of their theology. The law and the gospel are fundamentally one, through the one we come to the other.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. *The Scriptures*

On the whole, it may be said of all their theological leaders, without exception, that they spiritualize the

<sup>1</sup> *Leken Wechwyser*, B. R. N., IV, 329, 330.

<sup>2</sup> B. R. N., X, 226, 247.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, 217.

Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> They believe them explicitly, they see in them God's own revelation; but the Scriptures are to be subjectively appreciated. They have an inner meaning, which may or may not be the same to different individuals. And yet, widely as these teachers diverged from Rome, they apparently continued to receive its doctrine of the Canon. For all through these writings, especially in *Het Offer des Heeren* ("The Sacrifice of the Lord"), we find the Apocrypha of the Old Testament freely quoted in substantiation of their views.

Thus among the martyrs, Gielis Matthysz quotes Judith, Tobias, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus.<sup>5</sup> Adriaen Cornelis quotes First Esther, thereby recognizing the canonicity of its sequels.<sup>6</sup> And in the introduction of this Book of Martyrs, we find the Apocrypha quoted equally with the canonical books. Says Doctor Cramer,<sup>7</sup> "As is seen, the examples here, as also the quotations in the entire work, are taken indiscriminately from the Apocrypha and from the canonical books of the Bible."

The only exception among these martyrs is Jacques, who decisively rejects their authority in matters of faith.<sup>8</sup> They attached apparently little weight to the doctrine of inspiration. They had and loved the Scriptures, that was abundantly enough for them, and they were little concerned about their remote origin or their ultimate source or authors. If they rejected the Apocrypha, as did Jacques, they did so solely on the ground that Christ and the apostles never quoted them for the substantiation of doctrine. Pastor, the rationalist among them, evidently did not believe in the doctrine of inspiration at

<sup>4</sup> Idem, 55, 67, 182, 187, 189, 207, 273.

<sup>5</sup> B. R. N., II, 448.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, 213.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, 53, 54.

<sup>8</sup> B. R. N., II, 302.



all. He never calls the Bible "the word of God," but always refers to it as "the teaching of Christ," "the teaching of Paul," or "Jesus says."<sup>9</sup>

### 3. *The Doctrine of the Trinity*

The Anabaptists counted no great, outstanding theologians among their leaders. Even Adam Pastor, Menno Simons, and Derck Philips fade into insignificance, when we compare them with the mighty theological thinkers which the Reformation produced. They were not scholarly men in the true sense of the word; they never had been trained to think deeply or logically or philosophically. Neither Menno nor Derck apparently had a university training, and the latter, as we have seen, looked askance at its product. They had studied the Scriptures extensively and in a sense intensively, but either clung tenaciously to their literal meaning or else lost themselves in the mazes of bewildering spiritualization. Small wonder therefore that they should have little enthusiasm for a doctrine whose name was not even mentioned in the Bible. And when we touch the details of the doctrine of the Trinity, in our researches among these ancient Anabaptist theological productions, it is evident that not only the early Anabaptist leaders, but their successors as well, strongly objected to the terms "consubstantiality" and "person." If we read the hymns, printed behind the text of the "Sacrifice," the martyrs seem to be wholly orthodox and to use the word "Trinity" freely. But Dr. S. Cramer, after citing several examples, where reference is made to this doctrine, shrewdly observes:<sup>10</sup>

But, as I surmise, it has there become a term for God's impenetrability, a term which, as these four writers thought, corresponded with the Scriptural idea and which appealed to

<sup>9</sup> B. R. N., V, 365.

<sup>10</sup> B. R. N., II, 36.

them as the stereotyped expression of God's being. When, e. g., one of them, Joris Simons, advises his son to "knock at the door of his holy Trinity," it is evident that he might just as well have written "of his holy majesty," or something similar.

According to Pastor, the Holy Spirit has no independent personal existence. He is merely the "inspiration," "the inward moving of the heart to things that are good." Man's soul and body may be separated in death, because he is man; but God's Spirit cannot thus separate itself from God. We may not therefore suppose that God's Spirit can be conceived apart from himself and thus would form a separate, self-existent, personal being.<sup>11</sup> He therefore clearly rejects the doctrine of the Trinity.

But let us hear him somewhat more fully:<sup>12</sup>

I believe that the Father is a self-existing being. But the Holy Spirit is no independent or personal being; but he has an existence in the same way as a breath, a blowing, or the wind is an existence. And I esteem God's breath or blowing so high, that we may baptize in its name. . . All persons have proper names (*propria nomina*). Thus the Father's proper name is Jehovah, and the Son's proper name is Jesus. But the Holy Ghost has no proper or own name, because it is no person. Were it a person it would have a proper name. Holy Ghost is a name of its existence, for it can be named a Holy Spirit or breath, blowing, or wind of God, therefore a breathing (*anweyinge, aanwaaiing*) of God, but that is no proper or personal name.

He pursues the same argument in speaking of the incarnation:<sup>13</sup>

Were Christ a physical product of the generative force of the Holy Spirit, then we would call him the son of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>11</sup> B. R. N., V, 562.

<sup>12</sup> Disp., B. R. N., V, 573.

<sup>13</sup> B. R. N., V, 581.

[Then he goes on:] Thus Christ is conceived of no one but the Father himself. Thus he is truly called his son, for the Holy Ghost is none other but himself.

Menno Simons' views are expressed in these words: <sup>14</sup>

God is a spirit, whom the heaven of all heavens cannot contain, and besides this one, living, almighty, all-governing Lord and God, we know no other. He is the inexplicable Father, one with his inexplicable Son and inexplicable Spirit, in will, power, and works, and they can be separated from each other as little as power, light, and heat. The one is not without the other, as light and heat out of the sun. The one must be conjoined with the other, or the entire Deity is denied; for all that the Father does, he does through the Son, as the personified wisdom, power, light, truth, and life, proceeding from him and entering into the visible world or, as the Scriptures say—"his Word." The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, and is inseparable from the divine substance . . . whoso wants to go further into this unfathomable profundity, will either ascend too high, or he will not move from his place, or he will wander into bypaths; the right foundation will be lacking and he will act no more wisely than if one would try to pour the Rhine or the Meuse into a pail and endeavor to contain them therein.

As we turn to Derck Philips we find the following. In 1557, he wrote his "Confession of Our Faith," <sup>15</sup> in which he says, on the subject of the Trinity:

This only God and Lord is and remains one only God and Lord, from eternity to eternity, and has, according to his character, attributes, and works, many names in the Old Testament, whereby he is named. But in the New Testament, he is truly named by Jesus Christ, and is called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with which three names the whole essence (in as far as it is possibly intelligible by man) is pronounced by the Lord himself.

<sup>14</sup> Brons, quoting *Opera Omnia*, T. oder M., 157.

<sup>15</sup> *Bekentnisse onses Gheloofs*, B. R. N., X, 60-64.

The Lord Jesus Christ we confess to be the first born, only born, and own Son of the Almighty Father and living God, and we believe that there are in the same only (Son) Jesus Christ, two natures, a divine and a human nature. . . The Holy Spirit we confess to be the eternal and only Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit both of the Father and of the Son, a Spirit of truth and of all heavenly wisdom, the distributor of faith and of all spiritual gifts, a comforter of the consciences, by whom all Christians adore God and call him "Abba Father," by whom they justly call Jesus Christ "Lord," by whom they believe and, on their faith, are baptized into one body, by whom they are sealed and are to be sealed in the day of redemption; through whom Jesus Christ still rules his Church; by whom teachers are sent out to preach the gospel, by whom bishops and pastors are appointed to care for the Church of God. For he is the Paraclete, of whom Christ has spoken to his apostles.

Derck Philips evidently comes very close to the Catholic confession of the Trinity. Remember these lines were written in the bitter days of his contest with Pastor. But notice the significant absence of all reference to the term "Trinity" when he discusses the doctrine and of every reference to the very point in debate, the "consubstantiality" of the three persons in the Godhead, and of the word "person" itself. There is no question whatever but from the very beginning the Anabaptists had very cloudy ideas concerning the Trinity. The view of Menno looks strangely like Modalism. And, in this connection, it is very significant that Socinianism flourished largely in states, like Poland, where the Anabaptists had settled down in force; and also that this same Socinianism, once it was fully established and defined, had a disastrous effect on the later development of the Dutch Anabaptists. We shall find indubitable proof of that later on.

Schyn, in the eighteenth century, in outlining the doctrinal position of the *Dooptgezinden*, says:<sup>16</sup> "As to the

<sup>16</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.*, 386.

Trinity the difference lay in the words 'Consubstantiality' and 'person.' As to the Holy Ghost, he is the power, wisdom, breath of God, but his personality is left in doubt."

#### 4. *The Doctrine of Christ*

If the Anabaptists deviated considerably from the doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the creeds of Protestantism, we shall find a still greater difference in their Christological views.

How wide-spread was the discussion among Dutch Protestants, regarding the Christological heresies of the Anabaptists, may appear from the fact that not only did Guido de Bres, the author of the Dutch Confession of Faith, write a volume against them, but that even in the story of the martyrdom of Hoste van de Katelyne, published by Martin Micron, in 1555, we find a lengthy discussion of the subject, in which all the Anabaptist theories are carefully dissected and tested by the Scriptures.<sup>17</sup>

We meet with the same phenomenon in the story of the martyrdom of Fabritius, the celebrated Antwerp pastor. It was presumably written by his colleague, Joris Wybo, and was published in 1565. In the introduction we find a sharp attack on the Anabaptist Christology. The warning is sounded there that men may deceive themselves and that their suffering may go for naught,<sup>18</sup> "Whoever is out of Christ, that is, believes differently of Christ than the Scriptures teach, is erring from the right way and truth, and if he suffers, it is not for Christ, nor for righteousness sake." This warning is sounded again and again.

<sup>17</sup> B. R. N., VIII, 204 p.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, 286, 290.

Let us see in how far there was any just ground for this antagonism. The denial of the common Christological doctrine is in evidence almost from the beginning of Anabaptist history.

As early as 1526 divine honors were denied to Christ by Lewis Hitzer, a name famous among the vagrant Anabaptists. Hitzer was beheaded in 1529 at Constance.

Veluanus, speaking of the ancient Christological heresies, says, in his "Laymens Guide,"<sup>19</sup> "Thus also now several Anabaptists hold, especially the followers of Adam Pastor." Dr. S. Cramer discusses the whole subject of their Christology, as it reveals itself even in their martyrology, and he comes to the following conclusion:<sup>20</sup>

Doctrinal formulas are practically absent in all these confessions of faith of the martyrs. . . A being, which was God and man at once, appeared inexplicable to them. They found it far more intelligible that the preexisting Christ, at the conception, was changed into a man.

Look at some of these martyr testimonies. They indicate either that the rank and file of the early Anabaptists were singularly well indoctrinated by their leaders, or else that these views from the very beginning had been held by the sect and had become a sort of inheritance. So much is sure, Hitzer taught them, John of Leyden confessed them; they must therefore have been a Hoffmanite doctrine, and the martyrs express the same views before the Inquisition.

Jacques confesses before the inquisitorial court:<sup>21</sup> "I believe that He is the Son of God, in every way, in flesh and spirit, but where he got his flesh, that I leave to the mystery of God. The apostles did not dispute about that." Jooskint, executed in 1553, asked whether he did

<sup>19</sup> B. R. N., IV, 335.

<sup>20</sup> B. R. N., II, 36.

<sup>21</sup> B. R. N., II, 301.



not believe that Christ received his flesh from Mary, answered, "No." "Then it seemed," says the chronicler, "as if master Cornelis [the interrogator] would have fainted."<sup>22</sup>

We find the same views among the English refugee Anabaptists. Thus Joan Boucher was condemned in the Edwardian reign for believing<sup>23</sup> "that Christ was not truly incarnate of the Virgin, whose flesh being sinful, he could not partake of it, but the Word by the consent of the inner man in the Virgin, took flesh of her."

Neal calls this "a scholastic distinction incapable of doing much mischief." But those who are familiar with the Anabaptist teachings on the subject, at once catch the drift of Joan's remark.

Confining ourselves to the Dutch Anabaptists, we will compare the views of Hoffman, Pastor, Menno, and Derck Philips, their most eminent early theological thinkers.

Let us begin with Melchior Hoffman, the founder of the Dutch Anabaptists, if at least the ordination of preachers and the sending out of teachers make him such. In the "Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans," he tells us that the eternal Word, in the incarnation, has not taken his flesh and blood from the Virgin Mary; but has become flesh and blood in Mary's womb, that is, he has been changed into it, as the drop of dew falling into an oyster-shell is changed into a pearl. He claims that such is the teaching of the Scriptures in regard to the incarnation. In his "Ordinance of God," in which he develops this doctrine, we are told,<sup>24</sup>

that God, the merciful Father, has sent his own eternal word of power into this world, in the flesh, which has become flesh and

<sup>22</sup> B. R. N., II, 36, 223.

<sup>23</sup> Neal, "Purit.," II, 356.

<sup>24</sup> B. R. N., V, 161.

a body, in form like any other man, without sin, and that he has been a bodily, visible word of God, before his death and remains such even after his resurrection and to all eternity. He has not taken flesh unto himself, but has become flesh and a body, that by himself he might bring salvation and pay for the sin of all the world, with his innocent suffering of death and the pouring out of his blood.

Note the distinction between his "taking" on himself a body from the Virgin and his "becoming" flesh.

And again in the Strassburg disputation, in 1533, he defended himself against the accusation of heresy, by claiming: <sup>25</sup>

1. That John said, "The word became flesh."

2. If Christ had taken our flesh from Mary, it must be the accursed flesh of Adam, and then he could not have been our Redeemer.

3. That Paul had said, "The first man was of the earth earthy, the other Adam is the Lord from heaven." And he elucidated by contending against the idea that our Lord is the veritable fruit of Mary's womb, that we also are brothers and sisters and mothers of the Lord, and that we are called such by the Lord himself, if we do the will of his Father in heaven.

The dead literalism of the whole contention never seems to have struck Hoffman. Of the rare book from which I quote, only two copies were known to exist when the *Bibliotheca* was printed: one in the Mennonite Library in Amsterdam, the other in that of Louvain, now perhaps lost in the German sack of the city. Hoffman went even so far as to say, "Accursed be the flesh of Mary." <sup>26</sup> One can easily see how extravagant statements, like the above, in a day in which Mary was raised above the stars of heaven, would open wide the doors of the most relentless persecution.

<sup>25</sup> B. R. N., V, 132, 228.

<sup>26</sup> B. R. N., VII, 83.

Alenson claims, in his *Tegenbericht*, that these peculiar views of the incarnation were unknown to the martyrs before Menno; as if Menno and what he calls the Münster party had created this new type of theology.<sup>27</sup> Dr. S. Cramer justly sets this contention aside, by showing that not the Waterlandian collators of the martyr-book, of 1615; but they themselves, the Frisian editors of 1626, had done their best to create an unjust impression in regard to the faith of the oldest fathers.<sup>28</sup> For so much seems sure, that the peculiar views anent Christ's incarnation antedated Menno and perhaps Hoffman as well. It is scarcely conceivable that Hoffman should have been the originator of this radical departure from the Christological views of the ages. The views of the Strassburg leader seem too well defined, too finished a product, to have started with him. He must have received them from an older source.

In the Strassburg Disputation, quoted above, he had gone even more explicitly into this matter by saying<sup>29</sup> that

Christ had not taken his flesh and blood from Mary. But only as dough is changed into bread in an oven, or as a statue stands in the shop of a sculptor and is there finished, so the Word has been made flesh and blood in Mary. So that Mary's flesh and blood have done nothing in this birth.

The Strassburg theologians logically concluded that he denied the two natures in Christ. They saw in his teachings a subtle reappearance of the ancient doctrine of the Docetics.

Dr. S. Cramer, as a true representative of the Brotherhood, in our day, reveals his own position very clearly, when he tells us: <sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> B. R. N., VII, 179.

<sup>28</sup> B. R. N., VII, 146.

<sup>29</sup> B. R. N., V, 244.

<sup>30</sup> B. R. N., V, 132, 133.

It seems peculiar, even bizarre, thus to confound, even unto identity, the realm of the cosmic-physical with the spiritual; the life of the inner man, material or physical, with invisible things. But not only the men of the Middle Ages, but also the Protestants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, evidently did not feel the heterogeneousness of these realms.

Adam Pastor went far beyond Hoffman. Originally he had occupied the Hoffmanite standpoint, which in the main was that of Menno; but later he went off on a sharp tangent and began to consider these views erroneous.<sup>31</sup> Small wonder that Sandius and other Socinian leaders later on mention<sup>32</sup> Pastor "as the man, in our fatherland, or a neighboring territory, who had been the first and an able writer in that direction." Pastor treats the whole idea of Christ's preexistence with bitter sarcasm, as well as his incarnation, as it was held by the Church, and even the peculiar views of the Mennonites. The "Word" of John 1 : 1 was not a person, but God's creative word or will. The conception took place by an act of God's volition. Christ was certainly carnally related to Mary. He was a natural but a sinless man, not needing regeneration, because his generation left him pure and holy. Says he, "Had there been nothing of Adam in Christ, Adam had not died in the death of Christ, and that was the word, which God spoke, that Adam must die." So much for his humanity; but when it comes to the divinity of Christ he has this to say: "But since there was in Christ more than Adam's flesh, n. l. God's word, God's will, God's spirit, God's nature, and an innocent conversation, he has been the innocent Lamb which had not earned by his own guilt so miserable a death." "God's nature," as Doctor Cramer well observes, is not to be taken here in the sense of essence, but

<sup>31</sup> B. R. N., V, 379.

<sup>32</sup> B. R. N., V, 326.

must be taken in the sense of character. And that this is really the meaning of Pastor is evident from what he further says <sup>33</sup> about his equality with God (Phil. 2):

As one who did not consider it great, as a robbery, in such a form to be equal with God, as one who had one nature with God, the same will, the same spirit, the same mind and desires of the heart, as a true image, after the outward being of the invisible God.

Ponder these words, and tell me does this not strangely look like the theories of the modern German Christologians, and their *Gottesbewusstsein*? Did Pastor mean to say that Christ was divine in the sense that he was conscious of being at one with God in all these things? Divinity and humanity are as wide apart as heaven and earth. Five years after the disputes of Embden and Goch, of 1547, after which he had been banned by his former associates, he tells us he still held the same views as to Christ's divinity, which had led to his excommunication by the Mennonites. After a lengthy exposition of Christ's words concerning himself, in stating his disbelief in the divinity of Christ, in the accepted sense of the creeds, he concludes as follows: <sup>34</sup>

Therefore I confess that the divinity of Christ is the Father's wisdom in him, the Father's word in him, the Father's will, the Father's spirit, mind, and inclination in him, the Father's power and work in him, the Father's nature (character) in him, and whatever of this sort there is more in him of the one God, the Father.

Christ then was the Son of God, in so far as he was like God, in all the operations of heart and soul and mind, and thus felt himself to be the Son of God.

<sup>33</sup> B. R. N., V, 382, 383.

<sup>34</sup> B. R. N., V, 519.

And yet everywhere he speaks with the greatest reverence. As he sees it, it touches the honor of the Father if a place were assigned to Christ which, according to the Scriptures, is not his.<sup>35</sup>

When we read after Pastor we have to rub our eyes to see whether we are awake or dreaming. What he has to say is so startlingly modern that it bewilders the reader. And we wake up to see that not all "modernity"—I use the word in the Dutch theological sense—is modern.

From the radical we turn to the conservative branch of the Mennonites. Let us ask Menno Simons what he believes of Christ.

I may start out at once by saying that Menno's theological views throughout are somewhat hazy. He is not a clear thinker. Both he and Derck Philips wholly condemned and rejected the crass utterances of Pastor, on account of which they excommunicated him; for which act, as we have seen, Menno in his last days professed sorrow. He never impugned the divinity of Christ; we can therefore only test his views on Christ's humanity.

The "Laymen's Guide" quotes him as saying<sup>36</sup> "The Word within the body of Mary was changed into flesh, without taking over anything from the nature of Mary." Clearly the Hoffmanite doctrine therefore, which permeated Dutch Anabaptism in all its ramifications.

Mosheim tells us:<sup>37</sup>

Menno denied that Christ received from the Virgin Mary that human body which he assumed. On the contrary, he supposed it was produced out of nothing, in the womb of the immaculate Virgin, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Was Mosheim correct?

<sup>35</sup> Idem.

<sup>36</sup> B. R. N., IV, 139.

<sup>37</sup> Inst. Eccl. Hist., III, 244.



In his disputation with à Lasco, printed in 1544, Menno said: <sup>38</sup>

The eternal Word changed into flesh, as water turned into wine. Christ did not remain in his first, eternal, divine substance or essence. But leaving the same, was changed into another, i. e., a human substance and thus became man, able to suffer and to die, and has lost his first essence.

And again in his "Summary" (*Sommarie*), which was printed after his death, in 1600, he confesses:

That the Word in Mary became flesh and in her was nourished, fed, and has grown in her, as a natural child is nourished by its mother, and thus is called a fruit of Mary's body, in the same way as a natural offspring is called and acknowledged as a fruit of its natural mother.

Again:

A man and the son of man Christ became, but so that he has neither father nor mother nor relative among men. Mary calls Joseph his father and herself his mother. But he has neither father nor mother nor relationship among men, so that he should have become man from any human seed.

At times he speaks very disparagingly of the flesh of Mary. I think Dr. S. Cramer is absolutely correct when he says <sup>39</sup> that the doctrine of Hoffman and Menno, which alleges that the Word only passed through Mary, without coming at all in touch with her body, is simply the revamping of the ancient doctrine of Valentine, the Gnostic.

Pastor mercilessly exposes this logic or lack of logic of Menno, when he draws a lurid picture of the Creator becoming a creature, in the way Menno depicts it.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> B. R. N., VII, 468.

<sup>39</sup> B. R. N., V, 380 (Note).

<sup>40</sup> B. R. N., V, 377.

In 1543, Menno wrote <sup>41</sup> to à Lasco that

when first the article of the holy incarnation was proposed to him by the brethren, he was very much troubled and horrified in his heart. Yea, after he had received baptism, he has often been frightened, troubled, and shaken in his conscience, and prayed to God that he might clearly unlock the door and unfold to him the mystery of the conception of his blessed Son. And then he went on, wandering several days, weeks, and months.

Did he ever see the light, was the door of mystery ever unlocked? Judging from the conflicting statements on the subject, made by Menno, we may answer the question in the negative. For later on he wrote again against à Lasco, who once more came back to the old charge: <sup>42</sup>

That I should ever have said or written anywhere that the Word was changed into human flesh and blood, I suppose one never will prove against me. Although they dare say of us that I have spoken of it, as the high apostle has taught me "that the word became flesh." That testimony I leave untouched, and I commit the mystery, as to how much changed or unchanged, to Him, who by his almighty power, has so appointed it to the salvation of us all.

But all his denials could not undo the fact that, at the start, he had taught the Hoffmanite doctrine of the incarnation. As an old man, he professed his sorrow that he tried "to enter into mysteries, which were too deep for him."

His early position was abandoned by the Mennonites (*Dooftsgezinden*) of the eighteenth century and especially by the Waterlandians. They quote with approval his later words: <sup>43</sup> "I believe that God's eternal Word, in accordance with God's decree and promise, has become man

<sup>41</sup> Alenson's *Tegenb.*, B. R. N., VII, 180.

<sup>42</sup> B. R. N., VII, 200.

<sup>43</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.*, 33.

through the Holy Spirit, in the Virgin Mary, without connection with a man."

In the *Strassburg Compromise* of August 24, 1555, the Anabaptists decided <sup>44</sup>

that hitherto the incarnation has been driven too high or too low, by a mutual misunderstanding, by which the brotherly love has been impaired. [Then they confess] that the Scriptures teach, in some places that Christ brought his flesh from heaven; and elsewhere on the other hand it appears as if he took it from Mary. . . Till now they have been building an unnecessary tower, and God has confused their tongues, so that no man understood the other. . . In their simplicity they now want to abide by the Scriptures—the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

That was a sane decision, but it did not remove the difficulty, for the apparent contradiction in the Scriptures still remained.

Menno certainly had not shed much light on the question of the incarnation.

Let us turn finally to Derck Philips and see what he has to say on the subject.

The peculiar Anabaptist views on the incarnation are nowhere so fully and definitely expounded as they are in the writings of Philips. He devotes eighteen quarto pages in his *Enchiridion* to the incarnation and twenty-three pages to the true humanity of Christ.<sup>45</sup> Derck Philips unequivocally teaches that the body of Christ was a heavenly body and not derived from the Virgin Mary. And neither he nor any of his Anabaptist friends seemed to sense the fact that this belief invalidates the whole doctrine of the atonement. He argues precisely to the contrary and believes that the common Christian view, held by Catholic and Protestant alike, does this

<sup>44</sup> Brons., *T. oder M.*, 97.

<sup>45</sup> B. R. N., X, 135-153; 155-178.

very thing. The Anabaptist doctrine of the humanity of Christ stood closely connected with those of the sacraments and of salvation. They spiritualized the elements of the Supper. We eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ, because the Word of God became flesh, and therefore the Word of God and the flesh of Christ are one. Thus only the true spiritual communion of the believer with Christ can be established.<sup>46</sup> Listen to Philips: <sup>47</sup>

God could not help fallen and ruined man, by his own corrupted seed; but by His own eternal Word, the Son. Thus the salvation of man was like his creation. An earthly body of Christ would have been unclean and contaminated; but because it was a heavenly body, it could wipe out sin.

The comparison, which Philips makes between Adam and Christ, speaks for itself: <sup>48</sup>

Even as Christ, in Mary, was conceived by the Holy Ghost, so also Adam was created by God and had no other father but God. . . God's own only begotten Son, yea and his firstborn, yea God himself, became man and has divested himself of his divine estate, has left his glory and has adopted the form of a man and of a servant. *Summa*, he who was God became man; and he who became man, is God and man; and he who is God and man, dies as a man; and he who dies as a man, is raised from the dead as God.

All the Scriptural references to Christ as "the seed of the woman," "the seed of Abraham and of David," have to be taken figuratively.<sup>49</sup>

Christ may not be a natural seed of Abraham, but he is a natural seed of the spiritual Abraham, of his heavenly Father, which has been graciously promised by God to the patriarch Abraham.

<sup>46</sup> B. R. N., X, 141, 153.

<sup>48</sup> B. R. N., X, 140, 142.

<sup>47</sup> B. R. N., X, 165.

<sup>49</sup> B. R. N., X., 147.

Therefore no one, who is wise in the Scriptures, will be astonished that they call Christ "a seed of the woman" and "of Abraham" and a fruit of the loins of David and of the body of Mary. For since these Scriptures call Christ sin, who knew no sin, because he became a sacrifice for our sins, what wonder that the same Scriptures call him a seed of the woman and of Abraham, a fruit of the loins of David and of the body of Mary, on account of the reasons stated above, although he is truly no such thing nor may he be conceived by any Christian as such.<sup>50</sup>

Christ then is a man, but he brought his humanity from heaven. He was born of Mary, but he was not her child. He was created in Mary, as Adam was created from the dust of the earth. Such is the doctrine of Philips.

The Waterlandians, among the *Doopsgezinden*, utterly rejected the earlier Anabaptist doctrine, that Christ had brought his body from heaven, or that he took it from the air, or that he passed through Mary as water passes through a gutter or as light passes through glass. They embraced the common Catholic faith of the incarnation.<sup>51</sup>

The Frisians, on the other hand, had accepted this doctrine and tried to create the impression that from the beginning it had been the doctrine of all Anabaptists. Nor does it appear as if this contention was far in error, if we consider only the Dutch Anabaptists. If the term Anabaptist be taken generically, the Frisians were wrong.

It was Melchior Hoffman, who in 1532, started the innovation. The Münster party adopted the new view in 1534, and announced it in their "Restitution" as one of the articles of faith, which "God had restored by them, without any human wisdom . . . so that those who have not yet attained to a better understanding, cannot be fundamentally founded on a living faith in Christ."

<sup>50</sup> B. R. N., X, 147.

<sup>51</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.*, 395.

And among their restored articles of faith they mention "that Christ did not receive his flesh and blood from the Virgin Mary." Nicolai, in his *Inlasschingen*, makes it the second point, inferior only to adult baptism, of the six characteristics of the Anabaptists.<sup>52</sup> But Menno's wavering position aroused a storm of protests on all sides. He who, in 1544, had said in his "Small Confession-book" (*Belydingsboecksken*), "Thus Jesus Christ remains the noble, pure, and blessed (*ghebenedyde*) fruit of the body of Mary," was accused in 1556, by Martin Micron,<sup>53</sup> to have compared the flesh of Mary to a "stinking elderbush," a prickly thornbush, from which such glorious fruit could not be gathered. This was going to extremes, and we would certainly reject Micron's testimony, were it not for the extremely violent language sometimes employed by the meek Menno in his controversies. Alas, there are other witnesses besides Micron, who was known as an extreme hater of the Anabaptists. The accusation against Menno on this score is repeated in the *Successio Anabaptistica*,<sup>54</sup> and Dr. S. Cramer verifies these words as being the identical words used by Menno, in his tract "A Very Plain and Modest Answer" (*Een gans duitlyck end bescheyden Antwoordt*). If the rest of the book was as plain and modest as the references to Mary, it must have been a marvel.

### 5. Original Sin

Just a word or two about this point in Anabaptist theology. They admitted that sin entered this world through Adam's disobedience, but they qualified this admission by saying that <sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> B. R. N., VII, 462.

<sup>53</sup> *Waerachtigh. Verhael*.

<sup>54</sup> B. R. N., VII, 83.

<sup>55</sup> Schyn, quoting Rauf, *Uitv. Verh.*, 398.



everything which reigns or has been introduced into this world, unto eternal death, by the sin of Adam, has been removed by Christ, wherefore also the children, as regards their liability to eternal damnation, are liberated by the obedience of Christ. And they deny absolutely that original sin, in young children, tends to eternal death, or that by nature they are still children of wrath and guilty unto eternal death.

This is Rauf's statement, and the martyr-book strangely confirms it.

Jacques was examined before the inquisitors, and the following dialogue ensued: <sup>56</sup>

*Q.* How are children purified? Is not that done by baptism?  
*A.* They are purified by the blood of Christ, since he is the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world. *Q.* How is it then that they are purified from original sin? *A.* My lord, I have told you, by the blood of the Son of God, who died for us, when we were enemies and unbelievers. *Q.* Do you not believe then that children bear the sin of Adam, till the time that they are purified by baptism? *A.* One would have to prove that to me from the Scriptures. I believe in the word of the prophet, who says: "The children shall not bear the sins of the fathers, but the soul that sinneth shall die."

Claesken, another of the martyrs, was asked, whether she had any of her children baptized. Her answer was, No. The inquisitor then told her that, on account of original sin, a child must be baptized in order to be saved. She answered, "If a man can be saved by an external sign, Christ has died in vain." The inquisitor replied, "I read, we must be born again of water and spirit, therefore the children should be baptized." The answer came like a flash: "Christ does not say that to children, but to people who can understand it. Therefore I have given myself to regeneration. We know that the children

<sup>56</sup> B. R. N., II, 281.

are in the hands of God. The Lord said, 'Let the little children come unto me, of such is the kingdom of heaven.' " The interrogator, somewhat taken back, said: "The family of Stephen was baptized. Peradventure there were children among them." And Claesken triumphantly replied: "We do not stand on adventures; we have a sure ground."<sup>57</sup>

The doctrine of original sin then, if believed at all, was lightly carried, and in all their defenses of adult baptism we find the ever-recurring statement: "Original sin has been wiped out by the atonement of Christ; our children are therefore safe, if they die before they come to the years of discretion and confess Christ on their own faith." It is somewhat difficult to rhyme this belief with the habitual hesitation of the Anabaptists to receive baptism during the early years of adolescence. Young people under twenty were rarely baptized, and it was not an uncommon thing to wait till thirty or even later. Did they believe that all these unbaptized adults still occupied the status of children?

## *6. The Doctrine of Salvation*

The Reformers, one and all, had laid the corner-stone of the building of their hope, theologically, in justification by faith. For ages the pall of semi-Pelagianism had hung over the church. It taught that God saves man synergistically. Man is not dead in trespasses and sin, as Augustine had held in the fifth century; neither is he alive and perfectly able to help himself, as Augustine's contemporary and opponent, Pelagius, had taught; but man is ill and needs a little help to set him on his feet. Thus semi-Pelagianism had gradually become the fixed doctrine of the Roman Church. Like an electric shock, the bugle-

<sup>57</sup> B. R. N., II, 326.

blast of Martin Luther, "Man is justified by faith and not by the works of the law," had passed through the Church, and it had awakened some, but not all. The hardest lesson proud man can ever be called on to learn, is that of absolute prostration before the majesty of a sovereign God. And here is one of the characteristic differentiations between the Anabaptists and the rest of Protestantism. I may be wholly mistaken, but as I studied these sources, in the quaint old Dutch originals, the thought obtruded itself again and again, in reading on the incarnation, that what really was at work here was the leaven of Romanism; a conception of the incarnation which left Mary intact, a perfect virgin, after she had given birth to Christ. And in the study of the doctrine of salvation, the same thought came. The Anabaptists, in those early days of foundation-building, never got completely away from their old semi-Pelagian stamping-ground.

Hoffman combats the doctrine of the divine sovereignty, common to all the Reformers; and which Luther had specially emphasized, in his *Servo Arbitrio*, in his controversy with Erasmus, in 1525. Hoffman taught that all men have sinned, but all, none excepted, are called to salvation, because Christ died for all. This universal call presupposes the power to answer it. The cause of one's damnation never lies with God. Many claim that they have not sufficient grace to accept the gospel, and thus they are unwilling to use what they have got. God forces no one, but he desires that every one look away from self to God. On the other hand, he warns against over-confidence, as if the liberty of God's people means license.<sup>58</sup>

Doctor Cramer has justly called the last sentence "the

<sup>58</sup> B. R. N., V, 178.

premonition of the moral bewilderment, which later would show itself in the Anabaptist fanaticism." Wherever we meet an Anabaptist, he always deprecates doctrine and emphasizes the Christian life. To them life was all, it filled the entire horizon of all Christian aspiration. It largely extinguished the flames of hell and dimmed the glories of heaven. The Anabaptists are drunk with life, the Christian life, in all its ardor and sweetness and possibilities.

Pastor never touches free will or predestination in all his writings; he neither attacks nor defends the doctrine of God's sovereignty, he simply passes it by as unworthy of notice. But he plants himself four-square on the platform that man is able, from his own strength, to save himself, to accept the teachings of Christ, and to embody them in his life.<sup>59</sup>

All salvation is from grace, but that grace is common to all; in so far he goes along with Hoffman. But exiled as he is from the communion of his brethren, Pastor is always and ever a good Anabaptist, in that he never ceases to lay stress on life. In his view Christianity has little to do with doctrine. So much of doctrine only counts as is translated into terms of life. If it be true, on the one hand, that generally speaking, the faith of the Protestants, in the age of the Reformation, was perhaps a shade too objective, that of the Anabaptists, on the other hand, was absolutely subjective. If the others separated justification and sanctification to an extent, that in some cases proved absolutely dangerous, it was because Rome, in its theology, had blended them together almost to identification. And this same blending process we find among the Anabaptists. With Rome they saw in justification a medicinal rather than a forensic act of God. The in-

<sup>59</sup> B. R. N., V, 340.

definiteness and laxity of their theology made them in later years an easy prey to every anti-confessional current of thought with which they came in contact.

### 7. *The Sacraments*

Here we touch bed-rock in the doctrinal system of the Anabaptists. Of the Lord's Supper I will say little, for it is not there but in the sacrament of baptism that the Anabaptists radically differed from all Protestant bodies as well as from Rome. In whatever respect they might differ among themselves, here they presented a united front all along the line. They believed, one and all, in adult baptism on confession of a personal faith in Christ.

Every candid historian will have to admit that the Baptists have, both philologically and historically, the better of the argument, as to the early prevailing mode of baptism. The word *baptizo* means immersion, both in classical and in Biblical Greek, except where it is manifestly used in a tropical sense.

Doctor Newman's "History of Antipedobaptism" is of great value to the student who seeks for definite information on the subject. Of even greater value are the studies, written by an eminent Presbyterian and an eminent Mennonite. Dr. B. B. Warfield, of Princeton Seminary, wrote on "Archeology of the Mode of Baptism," in the October number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, in 1896, and Dr. De Hoop Scheffer, in 1882, published his masterly "Review of the History of Baptism by Immersion."<sup>60</sup> Here are three men, scholars of established reputation all, a Baptist, a Presbyterian, and a Mennonite, and all of them remain absolutely and impassively objective in their treatment of the subject, and their treatment is wonderfully clear and illuminating.

<sup>60</sup> *Overzicht der Geschiedenis van den Doop*, by Onderdorpeling.

The early Christians were Jews, and in adopting the rite of baptism for the admission of their converts to the nascent church, in obedience to their Master's command, they would follow such practise of baptism as was familiarly known to them. And such a practise actually existed in the proselyte baptism of Judaism. It was administered by immersion, of such completeness, as Doctor Warfield tells us,<sup>61</sup> that "a ring on the finger, a band confining the hair, or anything that in the least degree broke the continuity of contact with the water, was held to invalidate the act." All the lines between this baptism and later Christian baptism run parallel. The candidate is instructed both before baptism and during the rite; there are god-fathers, and there is the effect of baptism in producing a new creature. The question is, and it is far from being settled, which of these two baptisms had priority. On this question scholars are divided, some claiming that the Jewish baptism anteceded Christian baptism, others that the reverse was the case. Doctor Warfield claims the *a priori* possibility that the Jews imitated the Christians in this matter, or else that both rites arose from a common antecedent stock, and that in the course of time both assimilated something from the other. The latter of course is possible, but the former hypothesis appears to me untenable and a psychological impossibility on account of the fierce antagonism of the Jew against the Christian.

Here then again a very hopeful trail for positive results is lost in the mazes of mere conjecture.

So much seems certain, that the early Church immersed, although the *Didache*, which is placed as early as the first half of the second century, adds affusion as a permissible mode of baptism in case of necessity. But

<sup>61</sup> Bibl. Sacra, Oct., 1896, 639.



ordinarily there is to be trine immersion, in flowing water, by the bishop.<sup>62</sup> The ecclesiastical standing, however, of the "aspersed" was for a long period a matter of debate. Cyprian, in the third century, comforts them by telling them<sup>63</sup> that "aspersion also was an image of the bath of regeneration." But it was only *in periculo mortis* that such baptism was permitted. Chrysostom, Ambrose, Tertullian, and Gregory the Great all insisted on immersion. Infant baptism as well as adult baptism was administered by this mode, as does the Greek Church universally till this day. In the ninth century, the custom of placing the child erect up to his neck in the water, and then pouring water over his head, was condemned by the council of Celichyth, July 25, 816, in England; and this warning was repeated by Walifridius Strabo before A. D. 850.

The change came in the West, in France and Italy, in the thirteenth century. Bonaventura approved of aspersion in case of necessity, but still calls immersion "the common custom of the Church." Thomas Aquinas agrees with him in the matter of aspersion, but deems it "safer to immerse."

The councils of Clermont, 1286; Anjou, 1275; and of Nismes, 1284, still consider "immersion" the rule and "aspersion" the exception.

Now the compromise of immersing the body and of sprinkling the head again came up, and it proved the bridge for the change in the mode of baptism. By the close of the century, this custom had made much headway, and the council of Ravenna, in 1311, inverted the order and placed aspersion first and immersion second.

England alone refused to countenance the change. The

<sup>62</sup> *Didache*, Cap. VII.

<sup>63</sup> Ezech. 36, 25, *adspersionem quoque aquae instar salutaris lavacri obtinere.*

council of Exeter, in 1287, demanded immersion, even "in case of necessity," and John Duns Scotus, in 1300, insisted on trine immersion. All over the North a strong conservatism prevailed, in this matter. The colder the climate, the tardier the change, indicating that climatic conditions, as is often claimed, were not responsible for the abolition of immersion. A century later, in 1404, the Synod of Langres names only aspersion, while that of Meaux says naively, "Notice that the modern mode is not immersion, but aspersion or affusion." The whole scheme of uniting the Eastern and Western Churches broke down, at Ferrara, 1438-1439, on the difference in the mode of baptism.

By the time of the Reformation immersion had practically disappeared in Italy, France, Belgium, and Southern Germany. In Eastern Germany the propinquity of the Greek Church caused it to survive, at least in part. Of Holland Erasmus tells us, "Infants among us are aspersed, among the English they are immersed." In the latter country, as late as 1530, the manual of Henry VIII, of that year, prescribed trine immersion. And even the Book of Common Prayer of Edward VII demands immersion, except in case of weakness of the child. The same usage prevailed under Bloody Mary. Under Elizabeth aspersion gained favor, but even then immersion was not wholly abandoned. As late as 1645, Thomas Blake tells us, "I have seen, with my own eyes, many children immersed." Adult baptism had wholly disappeared in England, and practically everywhere else, since under the law infant baptism was compulsory.

We shall have to admit, therefore, that from the apostolic days till the Synod of Ravenna, in 1311, practically all the ecclesiastical documentary evidence is in favor of immersion.

Volumes have been written on the testimony of early Christian art. But as both immersionists and sprinklers see in the same pictures and works of art things which are diametrically opposed, we may safely conclude that this form of testimony is of little relative value and leads us nowhere.

By the time the Reformation had run its course, immersion was wholly abandoned in Europe, except in the far East. The Anabaptists of Switzerland did not immerse. Wolfgang Holiman, who was immersed by Grebel at Schaffhausen, at his own urgent request, was an exception. The cases at St. Gall, under Conrad Grebel, are set aside by De Hoop Scheffer as mere inferences, without any historical basis.<sup>64</sup> Neither at Strassburg nor at Münster were there any cases of immersion.<sup>65</sup>

Sebastian Franck, who minutely describes the customs of the Dutch Anabaptists, never mentions a case of immersion; nor did De Hoop Scheffer, their greatest and most acute historian, discover any.

Immersion came back to Holland from the Unitarian Poles. Johannes Geesteranus, an Arminian preacher, deposed by the Synod of Dort, in 1619, and a great favorite of the Socinians in Poland, was the first case in Holland. And he was immersed, at his own suggestion, by the Collegiants, whom we will meet later and who were the ecclesiastical free-lances of Holland. This immersion occurred in 1620.<sup>66</sup>

And from these free-lances, Richard Blunt, in 1640, received baptism by immersion.<sup>67</sup> "He went to John Batten, well known as a teacher among the Collegiants, and, receiving the rite at his hands, returned to England."

<sup>64</sup> *Overzicht*, 141.

<sup>65</sup> *Idem*, 145.

<sup>66</sup> *Overzicht*, 157.

<sup>67</sup> "A Question," 89.

Some who still believe in apostolic succession, find in this baptism of Blunt the connecting link between the remote past and the present. Later on I shall come back to this claim.

It is certain that prior to 1640, adult baptism by immersion was not practised in England, neither by the Anabaptists, who came over from Holland in the sixteenth century, nor by the followers of Helwys and Morton.<sup>68</sup>

David Benedict had strongly advocated this doctrine of apostolic succession and found the chain among the medieval sects, up to the time of the reintroduction of the rite in England, among the Particular Baptists, in 1641. But a closer study of these medieval sectarian movements has set this claim aside. Many of them it is true rebaptized those who joined them, but they also maintained infant baptism.<sup>69</sup> Doctor Newman has clearly established this point. The Donatists rebaptized, but they also baptized their infants.<sup>70</sup> So did the Waldensians, the main link in the chain.<sup>71</sup> As regards the practise of the Bohemian Brethren, who are viewed as the link between the Waldenses and the Anabaptists, Doctor Newman quotes their own official statement as follows: <sup>72</sup>

While admitting that in times past some of their society have rejected infant baptism; they are now prepared to affirm that baptism is to be administered to children also, in order that guided by their sponsors, they may be incited and accustomed to a life of faith.

Doctor Newman also wholly denies the claim that Wyclif and the Lollards rejected infant baptism.<sup>73</sup> The most diligent search has convinced him that prior to the

<sup>68</sup> Idem, 88.

<sup>69</sup> Lofton, E. B. R., II.

<sup>70</sup> "Antipedobaptism," 19.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, 42.

<sup>72</sup> "Antipedob.," 53.

<sup>73</sup> Idem, 55, 56.

incoming of antipedobaptism from the Continent, there was not a case of it among English evangelicals.<sup>74</sup>

Surely the Blunt expedition was not necessary to establish the rite of immersion among the Baptists in England and in the world. It was a broken reed to lean on. For the man who imparted was not able to impart, having never received in the line of apostolic evangelical succession. And stranger yet, the Collegiants believed in infant baptism as well as in adult baptism and in sprinkling as well as in immersion, for they received members of all denominations, asking no questions for conscience' sake. They insisted on nothing; each man among them was absolutely free to believe and to do as he pleased within gospel bounds. They were the most elastic and least dogmatic sect that ever existed. They were short-lived, and the bulk of them later on joined the Dutch Mennonites, who sprinkled. It is clear therefore that the Blunt baptism, in Holland, could have carried but little weight in the line of apostolic succession.

The Blunt church soon went to pieces, and the English Baptists repudiated the succession theory and adopted the anti-succession ideas of the restoration. The question of the "proper administrator" led to the discovery of the "proper administration," as Lofton says.<sup>75</sup> "Immersion was never written in an English Baptist confession till 1644, for the reason, as we shall see, [says Doctor Lofton] that it was never adopted by the English Baptists till 1640-1641."<sup>76</sup>

The Dutch Anabaptists as a sect never immersed, they are sprinklers till this day. If the Waterlandians, in exceptional cases permitted it, it was, as we shall see, always on account of conscientious scruples, and practically al-

<sup>74</sup> *Idem*, 342.

<sup>75</sup> Lofton, *E. B. R.*, 60, 65, 66.

<sup>76</sup> *Idem*, 51.

ways where people had come under the influence of the Collegiants; in precisely the same way as a Presbyterian pastor has been known to immerse candidates for membership who insisted on being baptized by that mode.

The real issue between the Anabaptists and the rest of Protestantism goes far deeper than these externals. It is not a question of the mode of baptism, of which some on either side of the line have made a dogma, and on which the Westminster fathers, influenced no doubt by the longevity of the rite of immersion in England, felt so liberal, that when the question came up, whether immersion should be an optional mode of baptism, the Assembly stood twenty-four to twenty-five when it came to a vote, so that the question was temporarily laid on the table. Of that debate the very phraseology of the Confession, anent baptism, bears the earmarks till this day.<sup>77</sup> Says the Journal: <sup>78</sup>

But as for the dispute itself, about dipping, it was deemed fit and most safe to let it alone and to express it thus on the Directory: "He is to baptize the child with water, which for the manner of doing, is not only lawful but also sufficient and most expedient to be, by pouring or sprinkling water on the face of the child, without any other ceremony." But it cost a great deal of time about the wording of it.

The real issue between the Anabaptists and their opponents is the status of the child in the church of God. It is the question of the identity of the Old Testament Church with that of the New Testament. It is the question of the immutability of the God of the covenant and of the permanency of the covenant of grace and therefore of the true Scriptural significance of the sacrament of

<sup>77</sup> Conf. Presb. Ch., XXVIII, III.

<sup>78</sup> Journal of the Assy. of Div., by Dr. John Lightfoot, Aug. 7, 1644, 299.



baptism. So much is apparent from all their controversial writings on the subject.

By all these Anabaptist writers the issues are clearly stated. The mode of baptism cut no figure whatever in their debates, for the simple reason that in the administration of the sacrament of baptism, they were one and all sprinklers.

I have searched these ancient documents, with absorbed interest, to find a trace of immersion, and I never found it. There was a large amount of material at hand for the search. First of all their martyrology. As I have said before, the accounts of these inquisitorial proceedings are in all cases verbatim reports of what occurred. And naturally, as these Anabaptists all had repudiated their early baptism and were rebaptized on their profession of faith, the question of their views on baptism occurs again and again. But in no single case was reference ever made to immersion. Now it is self-evident that a departure from the mode of baptism, accepted and practised at that time in the Roman Catholic Church, would certainly have attracted the attention of the inquisitor and must have called for an explanation. But this question is never asked.

This is an inferential argument; but of absolutely decisive importance are the theological treatises of Hoffman, Menno, Pastor, and especially Derck Philips, in some of which we actually find chapters on "true and false baptism." The mode of baptism is never so much as mentioned, but the discussion always covers the field of pedo- and antipedobaptism.

The Baptists of England therefore did not inherit immersion from the Dutch Anabaptists, but reintroduced the practise, in 1641, from independent study of the word of God and of the past history of the church.

In the library of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Rochester, a little book is preserved, so rare that besides it only one other copy is known to exist, and that is found in the library of the University of Utrecht. It is from the hand of Henrick Rol, who was burned at the stake, at Maastricht, in 1534. On the title-page the year 1536 is assigned to this martyrdom, but that is a mistake. The title is "The Key to the Secret of the Supper" (*Die Slotel van dat Secreet des Nachtsmaels.*) Rol belonged to the leaders of the Gulick reformation, the so-called Wassenburg preachers. If, as Doctor Cramer surmises, we find in it the oldest document, coming to us from the earliest beginnings of the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands, we have here a singular testimony in regard to their original attitude to the sacraments. Says Doctor Cramer: <sup>79</sup>

In this nebulous conception of baptism and communion (water baptism or spiritual baptism; the communion of believers on earth or the adoption of spirits in Christ's heavenly body), we find the clearest exposition of the peculiar tendency of the leaders of the Gulick reformation, the Wassenburg preachers, to whom Rol belonged. In the period 1531-1533, their ideas are not yet clearly defined; they do not yet antagonize infant baptism, and although they gather believers together, they do not bring them into a fixed organization.

All this quickly changed with the appearance of Hoffman. He is a bitter antipedobaptist and finds no warrant for the baptism of children in the Bible. It is not an apostolic institution—he tells us—we cannot find that they ever baptized a child, "nor will it be found to all eternity." Faith must precede baptism. Infant baptism is anti-Christian and of Satanic origin.

But in all this bitter invective of Hoffman, not a word

<sup>79</sup> B. R. N., V, 25.

against sprinkling, not a word about immersion; the thought of immersion apparently did not occur to Hoffman. And yet the claim is made that the Strassburg Anabaptists were immersionists. Their leader was simply bitterly antipedobaptist.<sup>80</sup> Why did his writings utterly disappear, and why is Hoffman never quoted by other Anabaptist writers, and why is his name never found on the Indexes? It was on account of his vital connection with the Münsterites, and therefore the *Doopsgezinden*, the followers of Menno, buried him in deepest oblivion. Moreover, these men freely quoted the Scriptures, but only very rarely one of their own contemporaries. They did, however, quote the Church Fathers, because on them was built the doctrine of the Romish Church, which they had left; for the rest they rested their case on the Bible.

In his *Enchiridion*, Derck Philips devotes fifty-two pages to baptism and twenty-three to the Lord's Supper.<sup>81</sup> There are many deeply interesting pages in this discussion; the reasoning is always cogent, the style clear as crystal. One never tires in reading after Philips, who is a deep and logical thinker. The whole argument is directed to the proof of the necessity of faith, as prevenient to baptism. It means the dying of the old man, the burial of sin, the laying aside of the old Adam, and the resurrection in newness of life. Derck bitterly antagonizes infant baptism, and uses all the well-known arguments against it. It is a human invention and must therefore be set aside. Incidentally Derck mentions the fact that Luther chides the Waldensians, because they baptized their children and denied at the same time that these children exercised faith.<sup>82</sup> In all his lengthy dis-

<sup>80</sup> *Ord. Gods*, B. R. N., V, 154.

<sup>81</sup> B. R. N., X, 69-134.

<sup>82</sup> B. R. N., X, 89.

cussion on baptism, there is not a word on the mode of baptism, nor a hint of difference, in this respect, between the Anabaptists and other Christians. He even speaks of "washing and aspersion with the external water" (*dat wasschen ofte begieten met het wtwendighe water.*) Himself sprinkled in baptism, he sprinkled others. It is very strange that, in his discussion of the sacraments, Philips uses time and again phrases and words and figures which are found in the later Dutch forms for the celebration of the Supper and for the administration of baptism.<sup>83</sup>

His writings evidently were familiarly known to the authors of these forms, and they quoted them consciously or subconsciously; either in approval or in such a way as to turn the quotation into a weapon against the Anabaptist doctrine. The discussion of Philips on the Supper would be acceptable to most Protestants today. If there is any criticism against it, it would be a decided tendency to spiritualization.

In all the debates and disputes with Anabaptists, on the subject of infant baptism, their opponents freely quote the Church Fathers—Irenæus, Origen, Chrysostom, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine—to prove its apostolic origin; precisely the line of argumentation, with which we are familiar in the various systems of dogmatic theology.<sup>84</sup>

Alas, for the Anabaptists and their views on baptism! No sooner had the schismatic spirit begun to assert itself, but they denied each other's baptism and began to rebaptize those who joined one group from another. And thus later on the *Dooptgezinden* hated the very name "Anabaptist," both for its Münster associations

<sup>83</sup> B. R. N., X, 73, 78, 80, 103, 114, 132.

<sup>84</sup> B. R. N., IV, 195.

and because people called them by that name, with a new innuendo to their habit of multitudinous baptisms. By the middle of the seventeenth century, they had largely outgrown the evil practise.<sup>85</sup>

On the Supper, on the whole, they held practically the same views as other Protestants, although their peculiar doctrine of the incarnation, especially in their earlier history, led them into strange bypaths.

Rol, whom I quoted above on baptism, believes that we should not pronounce the words of the institution over the elements, insisting that it savors of magic.<sup>86</sup> He also insists that the consciousness of sin is no bar to the partaking of the Supper, but that those who live in open sin must be kept from it.<sup>87</sup> But Rol places the spiritual communion far above the outward form, which the Church offers. The latter is nothing at all. "If your heart is at peace with God and you do not come to communion; nothing can thereby be taken from you, for your name is written in the book of life, by the invisible divine Christ."<sup>88</sup> Michael Sattler, in Switzerland, introduced the weird practise of putting bread and wine in one dish,<sup>89</sup> which practise had some followers in small groups among the Dutch Anabaptists.

Sebastian Franck laughed at both the sacraments and called them "puppet-work" and "child-play" (*poppenwerk en kinderspel*). No matter what the Scriptures say, they must bow before the testimony of God in the heart of man. And thus he utterly rejects the outward sacraments. Derck Philips strongly antagonized these views in his open letters to Franck. The Supper is only for

<sup>85</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.*, 65.

<sup>86</sup> *Die Slotel*, B. R. N., V, 74.

<sup>87</sup> *Idem*, 84, 92, 109.

<sup>88</sup> *Eine ware Bedynckinge*, B. R. N., V, 115.

<sup>89</sup> B. R. N., II, 63.

true believers and for them it is the very bread from heaven. His whole treatise on the Lord's Supper reads like some pages in *De Imitatione* of Thomas à Kempis, and has the same mystic flavor and power.

### 8. *The Ban*

The reformed Anabaptists, i. e., the followers of Menno and Derck, were very strict in their views of the holiness of the Church. It was a body of believers who had deliberately turned their backs on the world and now were a people separate unto the Lord. No Puritan, in the balmiest days of Puritanism, viewed life more askance or had more ascetic ideals as regards a believer's life, than had the *Doopsgezinden* (Mennonites).

The Dutch, in this respect, were equal to the best of the Swiss Anabaptists and far in advance of those elsewhere. All the rest of men were gentiles, they were the chosen people. They always spoke of themselves as "Christians," in distinction from those who were not; and all the latter were comprised under the generic term "world."

The first mention of the ban, so far as is known in their circles, was made in the decision of the brethren at Zollikon, in Switzerland.<sup>90</sup> It was there decided to excommunicate a brother who, after baptism, fell into sin. They were apparently led to this decision by the laxness of supervision and discipline in the Lutheran and Zwinglian Churches. In the bitter debates between the Anabaptists and their opponents, the former make this specific charge against Protestantism, as they knew it, again and again. The bride of Christ must be kept pure and spotless, and lo, this ideal seemed utterly forgotten. Of course the exuberant, fanatical Hoffmanite movement had no room

<sup>90</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 25.



for strict discipline, and during the Münster fanaticism the *hoi polloi* eagerly streamed to the new standard, and little account was taken of their past or present life, provided they were loyal to the king of Zion and to his kingdom. But the very extravagances of that party led those who separated from them and who became the founders of the new Anabaptists or *Doopsgesinden*, to put the bars up very high.

It is therefore, among the followers of Menno Simons and Derck Philips that the strictness of church discipline reaches its culmination. Of course there were degrees of rigor, due to the psychological differentiations between various groups and nationalities. The Latin mind does not work in the grooves of the German, nor the more vacillating Flemish mind in those of the stern Frisians.

Can we wonder therefore that in a sect, so self-centered as were the Anabaptists, so utterly governed by the principle of individualism as they were, this subject of the ban should have become the fruitful, I had almost said the sole, cause of their endless schisms?

Menno's views, as we have seen, were more elastic than those of his typically Frisian colaborer, Derck Philips. Menno was terrorized into stiffening his views on the ban, because he dreaded its recoil upon himself, as was threatened by Leonard Bouwens. Derck stood firm as a rock, immovable, implacable; he needed neither threat nor allurements to set his ideal of church-membership as high as any ban could make it.

To him therefore we go, in the main, for our views on this very important branch of Anabaptist theology—their doctrine of the keys or of church discipline.

Nicolai has proved conclusively how widely the earlier views of Menno and some of his associates differed from those which were later adopted. Originally they went no

further than the Scriptures. Menno wrote against Gelilius Faber, in 1539, his "Clear Answer" (*Clare Beantwoordinghe*) and in it he admonishes to absolute adherence to the instructions of the Bible. He there unequivocally states the principle that only adultery can break the marriage relation.<sup>91</sup> But, in 1547, Derck Philips and seven other pastors had finally resolved on a course of absolute rigorism. They planted themselves like a rock in their opposition to intermarriage between "believers" and "unbelievers."<sup>92</sup> We have seen what they meant by these terms. No matter among the Anabaptists was deemed more vital than this.

No brother or sister may marry outside of the Church. If one does, however pious, faithful, and godly the party married may be, he must be called married out of the Lord. If on the other hand one marries in the Church, such a marriage is unquestionably contracted in the Lord. Whoso acts to the contrary is banned and can never be reconciled nor readmitted to the Church, in whatever way he may seek it, with tears, complaints or groans.<sup>93</sup>

Some Anabaptists recoiled from a measure so severe, and thus an opportunity for schismatic developments was given. Shortly before his death, Derck Philips, in his last tract in defense of this position, in 1568, shows a little mollification. Age naturally has a mellowing effect. He is now willing to receive the offender back. But sin must be atoned for, and he does not recoil from a complete divorce, as the remedy. Remarriage, however, is not permitted.<sup>94</sup> There are exceptions, e. g., the conversion of one of the parties who were married when they were both unbelievers. In that case they may live

<sup>91</sup> B. R. N., VII, 465 p.

<sup>92</sup> B. R. N., X, *Van die Echt der Christenen*, 623 p.

<sup>93</sup> B. R. N., VII, 531 p.

<sup>94</sup> *Die Echt.*, B. R. N., X, 646.

together, provided the faith of the believer is not hurt thereby. The whole matter must be left to the pastors of the churches, in serious cases to a conference of pastors.

Sebastian Franck of course ridiculed this whole doctrine of avoidance (*Mydinghe*) and scorns it, as he does the external sacraments, foot-washings, etc.<sup>95</sup> But the opinion of Franck counted for little in orthodox Anabaptist circles.

Philips does not want to apply the ban to those who sin from weakness, but to wilful and public sinners.<sup>96</sup> His idea was that by the ban, the Church of God may be kept pure, and secondly, that the penitent brother may thus be converted.<sup>97</sup> But what if a man was hopelessly cut off, beyond the power of reconciliation, as Derck first had decided?

If one was "banned," he was completely separated from all the brethren. The law of avoidance, (*Mydinghe*) was awful in its provisions. No one might speak to him, eat or drink with him. The only conversation permitted was Scriptural admonition. The marriage relation was wholly suspended; but in his last word on the subject Philips admitted the possibility of its resumption, after conversion.<sup>98</sup>

The Anabaptist view of the necessity of marrying within the fold, was as absolute as that of Rome today. And the papal decree *Ne Temere* was not more rigorous than were the ruthless Anabaptist enactments on the subject. With these strict views of marriage with "unbelievers," what must they have thought of Luther's saying, in his sermon on the married life:<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> B. R. N., X, 495.

<sup>96</sup> *Enchir.*, B. R. N., X, 255 p.

<sup>97</sup> B. R. N., X, 660.

<sup>98</sup> B. R. N., X, 661, 664, 665.

<sup>99</sup> *Von Eheleichen Leben*, 1522.

Marriage is an outward carnal thing, like other worldly matters. Just as I may eat, drink, walk, ride, buy, and talk with a heathen, Jew, Turk, and heretic, so I may also enter the married life with him and remain therein.

It must have unspeakably horrified them. For the Anabaptists looked at marriage, even with a pious Protestant, as a heinous offense.

Precisely what happened in Ireland, under the operation of the *Ne Temere* decree, happened in Holland in the sixteenth century under the decree of avoidance. Wives were torn from their husbands, mothers from their children in the dead of night, and no one knew what became of them.<sup>100</sup> It extended to the complete isolation of the banned person from father, mother, brothers, sisters, husband, wife, and all others, whoever they might be. It prohibited buying, selling, eating, drinking, etc. The banned person was to be helped by no one, nor was their help to be accepted by any one, even in case of danger from fire, water, or death itself. This extreme severity of the decree was later modified, so that help might be given in case of extreme necessity.

Derck Philips had immense weight among the *Doopsgezinden*, especially after Menno's death. They considered him a sort of an apostle. Hoyte Renix writes<sup>101</sup> to him, in 1566, "Come to us with your whole family as Jacob came to Egypt, and we will here in your fatherland care for you as a dear old father and serve you all our lives." But there was a string tied to the invitation. He must come as a partisan of Renix, or else he had better stay away. Refreshing reading, these old documents! But the bait was dangled in vain, and Derck was not to be enticed away from the straight path of duty as he saw it.

<sup>100</sup> B. R. N., VII, 438.

<sup>101</sup> B. R. N., X, 670.

Originally admonition of the accused preceded the ban; later on, when the banning fever reached its height, this practise was set aside. The bolt struck one from a clear sky. All sorts of sins were punishable by the ban. Those early Anabaptists made the way of life very straight and very narrow. Their homes and their furniture were watched, their clothing and their ornaments, their eating and drinking, their social contact with unbelievers or "banned" people, even things so remote as whether one might attend the funeral of an unbeliever, or stay at the table of an unbeliever, if one met there a person under the discipline of the church.

It was a bleak life indeed; no Puritan life ever was bleaker.

In the true martyr days, when death stalked among them, these questions did not disturb the hearts and minds of the people. It was when the stress of the outward pressure lessened, that the stress of inner tyranny became greater.<sup>102</sup> Of course there was a milder tendency, common sense was not wholly dead among them, and that tendency after a while became a party and a schism and a new sect.<sup>103</sup>

So far went this fanaticism that bride and groom, on their wedding day, were asked whether, in case of a lapse and of the ban, they would mutually be willing to obey the law of avoidance.<sup>104</sup> Much on the principle of the candidate for the ministry, in ultra-Calvinistic circles, who was asked whether he would be willing to be damned for the glory of God, if occasion arose. The ban led to schisms, and schisms led to the undoing of the ban. For one sect among them banned the other, till nearly all had passed through the bitter experience; and the

<sup>102</sup> B. R. N., II, 37.

<sup>103</sup> B. R. N., VII, 222.

<sup>104</sup> B. R. N., VII, 530.

"banned" of one sect were not rarely welcomed in another. Some literally played with the ban. People were "banned" and, before the meeting was over they were received again.<sup>105</sup> It developed into an inquisition. Think of it! If one in secret told his brother his fault, and if this other person did not at once inform the elders of the church, both must be "banned" and be given over to the devil.<sup>106</sup>

They aimed high in raising this disciplinary structure; but the abuse of the power of the keys soon made it a laughing-stock and a ridiculous memory to their children's children.

The autocratic and local power, by which the ban was pronounced, rested in the "consistory" of the local church, and one can easily understand that members of a local church were amenable to it. But where each church had absolute autonomy and was a unit in itself, it seems passing strange that the Hoorn delegates, with Hoyte Renix (whose unctuous letter I quoted above), pastor of the church at Bolsward, and others should have the temerity to put Derck Philips under the ban; and that he in turn, in a letter dated June 8, 1567, should announce<sup>107</sup> to Hoyte Renix that "he must suspend his services till he has cleared himself before the Lord, before us and others, in the presence of his accusers."

A similar letter was written to Jan Willems and Lubbert Gerrits of the city of Hoorn, June 30, 1567, in which they also were suspended from their office on the same condition.<sup>108</sup>

All these things are anomalies. The Anabaptists evidently had not thought their church ideals through to

<sup>105</sup> B. R. N., VII, 239, 528.

<sup>106</sup> B. R. N., VII, 456.

<sup>107</sup> B. R. N., X, 689.

<sup>108</sup> B. R. N., X, 691.



an ultimate concept. Everything in their theology, their church life, their views of discipline, was hazy and ill defined, in a plastic state, in fact.

And yet they were evidently not far enough removed from Rome, to get wholly away from the episcopal idea. In fact, they called their pastors "bishops"; but how, and with what functions and powers? There was still in them a leaven of clerical absolutism and a stern judgment of offending members. Or did these leaders naively reach out after apostolic powers, without an apostolic mission?

The more one studies these early Anabaptists, the less one seems to understand them. The Mennonites abandoned all chiliastic dreams and tendencies. The very mentioning of the name even dies out among them. Chiliasm had so exhausted its possibilities among the Hoffmanites and the Münster faction that it was wholly abandoned and cast aside by the followers of Menno and Derck Philips. It cuts no figure in their later theological development. Their eyes are wholly directed on the path before them, and their only aim is to live acceptably to God here below. They leave the future to God. Eschatology, the future, heaven, and hell do not occupy the commanding position in their theology which they possess in the Protestant theological systems of their day. One word is written in large capitals over the whole of their ecclesiastical and theological development and that word is *individualism*. It was both their strength and weakness, their glory and their bane.

## V

### INTERNAL CONDITIONS AND VIEWS OF LIFE

IN the lectures before this we have paid but little attention to the more intimate side of the history of the Anabaptists. We have studied their origin, their early leaders, we have followed the tumultuous stream of their early history in the Lowlands. We have seen the terrific outburst of fanaticism in the Münster tragedy and the almost miraculous change which took place in them through the reaction from that fanaticism. And in the very rebound, they were caught by the most furious persecution which ever swept over Holland, literally drenching the soil with the blood of their martyrs. We have studied the amazing variety of theological types which revealed themselves in the unchecked assertion of that individualism which was one of their fundamental characteristics. We have seen the weird outburst of sectarianism, almost as intense as their political fanaticism, which divided them into small, intensely hostile factions. We have studied their theological aberrations and their bitter quarrels about the administration of ecclesiastical discipline—a discipline which searched out the offender even in his bedchamber.

Small wonder if, under these conditions, many of the more intelligent or less self-sure of their members left their ranks altogether and lost their identity in a different type of religious life; or if, like Obbe Philips and others, they did lose themselves in absolute irreligiousness or in a declaration of spiritual independence, which looked with

disdain on all sects and all types of religious life alike and, sufficient unto itself, refused to enter into any temple of man's building, whatever its name or pretensions.

### 1. *Defections*

The defections among them were sufficiently numerous for Blaupot ten Cate to call attention to the sudden growth of the Reformed Church in the Northern Netherlands, which coincided with the furious outburst of the schism between the Frisians and the Flemings in those regions, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

Among those who early left the Anabaptist communion, Carel van Ghent mentions Christian Entfelder, George Haugh van Juchsen, John Denck, Ludwig Hetzer, Dr. John Stabitus, all of whom he calls "learned men."<sup>1</sup> That the persecutions were a fruitful source of this defection we learn both from the text and the songs in *Het Offer*, the Anabaptist martyrology. We find there repeated warnings against it and admonitions to steadfastness. Many had apparently made their peace with Rome and had gone back into its communion, and more perhaps had joined the newly established Reformed Church, the State Church of the new Republic.<sup>2</sup> And David Joris had carried many others away.<sup>3</sup>

Derck Philips, in his *Enchiridion*, also warns repeatedly against this danger of infidelity to the common cause, and urgently advises all Anabaptists to look out for the first signs of it.<sup>4</sup>

The Roman Catholic priests everywhere preached a crusade against them. In the Southern provinces especially their zeal was unbounded, about 1566. Zwinglians and Melanchthonians, sharply distinguished from the

<sup>1</sup> B. R. N., VII, 518.

<sup>2</sup> B. R. N., II, 136.

<sup>3</sup> B. R. N., II, 101, 454.

<sup>4</sup> B. R. N., X, 188, 235.

Lutherans, abounded there, and "the Anabaptists, Cas-siandrians, and other heretics" must all be rooted out, as we learn from a sermon of Cornelis Adriaansz,<sup>5</sup> a Roman Catholic priest of Brabant. Ypey and Dermout, in their history of the Dutch Reformed Church, deliberately state that the number of Anabaptists who joined that church in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, was greater than that of converts from Rome. Some of their churches disappeared entirely, we are told, and others lost many members and—most conclusive proof of all—the records of that time prove that a mass of people who were adults joined the Reformed Church by baptism. As the Church did not recognize adult Anabaptist baptism, and those who had been baptized among the Anabaptists had thereby repudiated their early baptism, they were thus reinitiated into the Church.<sup>6</sup> This condition of things slowly changed when the centripetal force began to assert itself among the *Doopsgezinden* and when their civil and social status was finally recognized and improved.

## 2. *Their Views of Life*

They looked upon life as a true *Militia Christi*, a warfare for Christ. Although subsequently many people of considerable means were found among them, they belonged originally to the masses rather than to the classes; or rather, as we have seen, to the thrifty middle class of society. While not condemning wealth, they looked upon pride and ostentatiousness, in the early period of their history, as a deadly sin. The blue laws of Geneva and New England might have been written by them. As they took the Scriptures in the literal sense, all outward adornment was frowned on, in men as well as in women.

<sup>5</sup> Y. en D., *Gesch. der Ned. H. K.*, II, 181; *Aant.*, (215).

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, III, 54, 55.

Their dress must be such as behooves those who are followers of the lowly Nazarene. Their tendency was ascetic. Self-denial, the pulling out of an eye for Christ's sake or the cutting off of a hand or foot for the kingdom of heaven's sake, the crucifixion of the flesh, the subjugation of the old man—these were their ideals. They were literally men of one book, and that book the Bible. How faithfully they read it appears from their almost uncanny familiarity with its text. They quote the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, with a readiness and an accuracy, which abundantly prove that most of their spare time was spent in the perusal of these precious pages. We read books, they read *the Book*; it was their *vade mecum*, their guide, their solace, their inward judge, their refuge, their all in all.

The pleasures of life, the common excitements and passions of life, its extravagances and dissipations passed by them without touching them, they were an eddy in a turbulent current. Their life was Christ, their death their gain. Such a view of life makes for drabness, a killing monotony; it is apparently wholly one-sided and must inevitably lead to mysticism, you say. Perhaps it did, and there are not a few pages in the writings of these old *Wederdoopers* to indicate that it actually had such an effect. But it left the mind placid; it sowed the seed, which in England was to sprout up in a great variety of new revelations of this same *Weltanschauung*; and it enabled the long line of their martyrs to go to their death with a heroism which was a source of amazement to their enemies and of ceaseless inspiration to their friends. It is safe to say that, had their view of life been other than it was, the entire Anabaptist movement would have been swamped under the load of persecution, and that not one of their churches would have survived.

### 3. *Their Confessions*

As the *Doopsgezinden* or Mennonites, that branch of the great Anabaptist family which in the main followed the teachings of Menno Simons, had no fixed ecclesiastical organization, but wholly followed the polity of the local autonomy of the church, they were averse to symbols in the accepted sense of the Protestant Churches. Logically so. But the time came when it was necessary to show the world what were their real tenets, not to be considered in the sense of a *vinculum ecclesiarum*, but rather as a basis of understanding, of union in a large sense, and as an expression of their common faith.

In the eighteenth century, Hermannus Schyn, one of their leading pastors, outlines their position as follows: They agree, he tells us, in these things:

1. Adult baptism on faith.
2. The office of the magistrate is necessary in this sinful world, but Christians should avoid it, since believers are citizens of a heavenly city. Obedience, however, is the duty of Christians.
3. War and all bearing of arms are forbidden to the believer.

4. The oath also is forbidden.<sup>7</sup> (Matt. 5 : 33-37.)

As to the expression of their faith, the Waterlandians had published a confession of faith in 1580, written by Hans de Ries and Lubbert Gerritsz. In 1665, the United Flemish, Frisian, and German *Doopsgezinden* issued a general confession, which became the peace basis between them. This general confession contains:

1. The Concept of Cologne, of May 1, 1591.
2. The Apology, handed to the Deputates of the Court of Holland, October 8, 1626.

<sup>7</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.*, 96 p.



3. *Het Olyftakje* ("The Olive Branch"), first printed in Hamburg in 1684. It contains the Psalms of David, a number of hymns, and the above-named document—*Korte Belydenisse des Geloofs, mitsgaders de voornaamste zeden, welke in de Kerkelyke discipline, in de Christelyke gemeente, in zwang zyn* ("A Short Confession of Faith, besides the principal customs which are in vogue in ecclesiastical discipline in the Christian Church.")

4. *Korte Confessie of Belydenis des Geloofs en der voornaamste stucken der Christelyke Leere, zoo dezelve, met kracht van Schriftuur, by dengeene, die men, met eenen gemeenen Naame, de Vereenigde Vrieschen en Hoogduitschen noemt, geleerd werd* ("A Short Confession or Profession of Faith and of the principal points of the Christian doctrine, as they are taught, with the authority of the Scriptures, by those who are called with a common name, Frisians and Germans.").

5. The Confession of Dort, April 21, 1632, with eighteen articles.

6. The True Covenant of Union, approved at Leyden, in October, 1664.

Here is the basis of the Mennonite faith of the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

As the *Korte Confessie* is the most circumstantial of these, it may be well to look at it somewhat more closely. Have the *Dooptsgezinden* changed their doctrinal basis in any point, since we have heard from them last through the mouths of their chief protagonists? Let us see. As this short confession is one of the bases of union among them, we may consider that it expresses the theological views of the mass of *Dooptsgezinden*, at that time. It contains twenty-one articles. At many points they agree, at least in substance, with the Protestant confessions in

<sup>8</sup> Idem, 156 p.

general. They do so in the articles bearing on the person of God (I), the creation of all things (II), the fall and restoration of man (III), the purpose of Christ's advent and his offices (VI), the atoning death of Christ (VII), the resurrection and exaltation of Christ (VIII), the promise, mission, and office of the Holy Spirit (IX), the Church of God (X), the Lord's Supper (XII), the works of love (XIV), the forgiveness of sin (XX), and, in a modified way, the resurrection of the body and the life to come (XXI). They differ from the common doctrine of Protestantism in the article on the free will (IV) and that on the incarnation (V) which, though carefully worded, impugns the true humanity of Christ. Says the Confession :

And according to the prophecy of Isaiah, in the original body of Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph of the House of David, but had no knowledge of her—by the power of the most high God and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, at Nazareth, in order that he might be called a Nazarene—he was conceived and has not adopted flesh, but became flesh, remaining what he was, namely God and God's Son, and becoming what he was not, namely man and the Son of man. In this way that we acknowledge that the child, which Mary bore and which was born at Bethlehem and grew up and suffered on the cross, is externally and internally, visibly and invisibly, just as he walked here, the only, own, and true Son of God and the Redeemer of us all.

There is here a veiled echo of the old Anabaptist doctrine of the heavenly humanity of Christ. Note the old, familiar stress on "became" and the heavy accentuation of the divinity of Christ.

In the article of baptism (XI) there is of course the widest divergence. That on foot-washing (XIII) is not an article of faith but of practise. That on the married estate (XV), also out of place in a confession of faith,

rings true till, in the second part, we come to the inhibition of mixed marriages. That on the office of the civil magistrate (XVI), while recognizing its necessity, yet forbids a believer to fill such an office. The next, on the oath (XVII), absolutely forbids a Christian to swear in any way. The article on discipline (XVIII) clearly sets forth the old Anabaptist doctrine, especially as regards the punishment of those who contract an outside marriage (*Buitentrouw*). The authors evidently know that the times are changing, and therefore they express their views with manifest hesitation; yet they conclude "that such an outside marriage to an unrepentant one and an unbeliever should be punished with expulsion from the church, till the sinner finally repents." We notice that the way of repentance is now left open; in so far the harshness of the creed has been toned down. But under it still all "outsiders," all non-Anabaptists, are "unbelievers." They are still sectarian to the core.

The article on *Mydinge* (avoidance) is typically Anabaptistic. No communication is to be held at all with the one banned. He is like one dead in all worldly matters. Efforts for his salvation are not prohibited, and even, in case of absolute need, help may be given him.

The acceptance of these so-called confessions, however, did not restrict the rights of the individual churches. They were not confessions in the commonly accepted sense, but simply efforts to arrive at a better mutual understanding in regard to their basic faith.

In the seventeenth century, Schyn tells us, there were four distinct sects among them, and by that time they recognized each other's baptism and began to permit opening their communion tables for members of factions differing from their own. But it was a slow and tedious process.

A compromise was established between the Flemings, the United Germans, and the Frisians, October 5, 1630, and nineteen years later, in 1649, the Flemings and Germans formally united with this group. Between them and the Waterlandians by and by more cordial relations were established, till they finally were united on the basis of a common faith as above described.

By the middle of the eighteenth century practically all the *Dooptgesinden* in Holland, West Frisia, Zeeland, Utrecht, Overisel, and Vriesland, held their services in common, in city and village, without any distinction of name.

The very thing they had therefore so bitterly opposed at the beginning, the writing of a confession of faith, although they never adopted anything like it in the Protestant sense, saved them at last. And through the confession which they made and adopted, as a common basis, the centripetal force began to assert itself, and the horrid nightmare of their endless schisms became a thing of the past.

And yet in their history it was proved true, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of their children were set on edge," for when the occasion arose they were ready to sever these bonds again. Only Amsterdam, Haarlem, and a few old Frisian congregations still continued the old schism.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. *Their Social Standing and Pure Life*

Many historians have represented the Anabaptists as belonging exclusively to the poorer classes. Fruin describes them as *de heffe des volks*, the lower class of society. It is true not many of the ruling class or of the nobility were found among them, but the general con-

<sup>9</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.*, 87.

ception in regard to their social status is evidently wrong, they were not what they were thought to have been.

*Het Offer des Heeren* bears silent testimony to this fact. Among all the martyrs mentioned in this martyrology, we find only one, Claesken's husband, who is unable to read. Elizabeth van Leeuwarden knows Latin, also Jan Geertsz. Jacques d'Auchy reads the Swiss translation of the New Testament. Gielis Matthysz reminds his brethren of their evil past, when they were "eager for costly banquets or dinner parties, yea, for pride of apparel" (*proncken end pralen*). Jan Claesz had caused six hundred copies of one of Menno's books to be printed at Antwerp. They are always reminded of the duty of hospitality, manifestly impossible for very poor people.

From all this it appears that the bulk of them belonged to the middle class of society, *den niet onbemiddelden en niet onbeschaafden burgerstand*, as Cramer puts it.<sup>10</sup>

After the Münster tragedy their life was irreproachable. Says the inquisitor to Claes De Praet: <sup>11</sup>

As to your life, you have an honorable conversation among all men. You live peaceably together, in love and harmony, which is very good. You help each other, which is also good. You stand by each other in trouble and are willing even to die for each other. This is all good. I can say nothing against it. . . But what does it help you and you have not the faith?

Yes, they were obedient to death. Listen to the last words of the Confession of Jacques: <sup>12</sup> "I also pray, if I should have sinned against the Emperor or King, or against any one else, that they may be pleased to forgive me, through the great love and mercy of God."

The repeated references to showiness in dress and lavish ways of living, found in this martyr testimony, and

<sup>10</sup> Intr. *Het Offer*, B. R. N., II, 27.

<sup>11</sup> B. R. N., II, 247.

<sup>12</sup> B. R. N., II, 273.

also the distinction between the Flemings and Frisians, as to dress and house-furnishings, give one the ineradicable impression that we are here dealing with a class of society far removed from its dregs.

The name *Slodder Mennonists* ("Slovenly Mennonites") given to some, has no reference to their way of living, but to their laxity in the application of the ban. They are thus distinguished from the rigorous "Hard Mennonites." Sometimes the word "soft" is used instead of "slovenly."

The Waterlandians belonged to these softer types. On this account the zealots or rigorists called them "an impure Church," especially because, besides laxity in church discipline, they left the oath entirely to the dictates of the individual conscience.<sup>13</sup>

Nay, we have better proof than any heretofore adduced in regard to their social status. We have seen how William of Orange interfered in their behalf at Middelburgh, in 1577, because even then they had been able, instead of doing military service, to assist him by furnishing him with considerable sums of money. In the seventeenth century, Huber, the Frisian advocate, could say: <sup>14</sup>

The Mennonites are not dangerous citizens; on the whole they are peaceable, industrious, well-to-do, and they need little for themselves. They are therefore very much in a condition to pay taxes and in times of distress to help the country with money.

Did they do it?

In the war with England, in the province of West Frisia alone, 4,856 Mennonites paid the huge sum of five hundred thousand guilders, for that time as much as five

<sup>13</sup> B. R. N., VII, 175.

<sup>14</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 139.



million would be today. Only a little later, in the war with France and its allies, a new levy of four hundred thousand guilders was laid on the Mennonites, in the same province; this time not as a prayer but as a direct demand. And the money was raised. In 1676 a third tax of 123,943 guilders was imposed and, although this time with some trouble, the sum was raised again. When in 1672 the Dutch troops in North Holland went into winter quarters, they were absolutely in need of everything. The States General asked the *Doopsgesinden* for aid. One of them, Meyndish Arends Meyn, a well-to-do merchant, visited a few of the churches and, in a few days raised thirty thousand guilders, got fifteen thousand pairs of shoes, twelve thousand pairs of hose, one thousand shirts, and linen and food of all sorts.<sup>15</sup> In Groningen, in 1666 and subsequent years, in a comparatively short time, twelve little churches raised, for the defense of the city, 149,810 guilders. Let us say that in raising these huge sums they gave their all, that they stripped themselves bare. Perhaps they did. But before one can strip, there must be something to strip. Fruin's *heffe des volks* would have been utterly unable to do these things.

They were peaceful, industrious, and saving and therefore must make financial headway.

And Doctor Maclaine, living at the Hague, about 1764, tells us, a century later,<sup>16</sup>

It is certain that the Mennonites in Holland at this day are, in their table arrangements, their equipages, and their country-seats, the most luxurious part of the Dutch nation.

In the eighteenth century then, if we are to believe this witness, their ancient simplicity and Puritanism had

<sup>15</sup> Idem, 139.

<sup>16</sup> Mosheim, III, 244, (note 23).

largely departed. But it is an added proof that we are not to underestimate the social standing of the *Dooftsgezinden*, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

### 5. *Peculiar Views*

In his bitter attack on Martin Luther, in *Sacramentorum brevis Elucidatio*, Eustachius de Zichensis<sup>17</sup> gives us a glimpse, from the Roman Catholic standpoint, at the cause of the eccentricities in doctrine and life of the Anabaptists. Says he:

By the side of Luther other antagonists have arisen, who need to be fought at least as strenuously as he. They go much farther than Luther. They lean on their individual judgment. Being of no standing in any university, they leave on their left hand all that is taught in the universities, all that the most sapient philosophers and scholastic theologians have taught; and they try to bring all Christendom back to the time when its religion was still in a state of infancy. They reject all authority in State and Church, they not only criticize faults but they condemn all ecclesiastical dignitaries. They say that all archbishops and bishops are common sinners. They deem that they are fully able to understand and explain the Scriptures, without any one's assistance, etc.

The last words are a slanderous attack on the entire body of Anabaptist believers, as if the guilt of Münster was that of the whole body. But he is correct in so far as he sees the *vitium originis* of the entire sect in their overweening individualism.

First of all among their peculiarities stands their refusal to swear an oath. This peculiar trait of their religion was not original with them nor did it die out when the great mass of *Dooftsgezinden* abandoned their position on the oath.

<sup>17</sup> B. R. N., III, 295 p.

Originally it was one of their distinguishing characteristics. By all branches of the Anabaptist brotherhood the oath was strictly forbidden.<sup>18</sup> Matthew 5 : 33-37 was taken in an absolutely literal sense, and all believers, for all time, are absolutely inhibited by these words from swearing under any conditions whatsoever.

In the "Confutation of the Determination of the Parisian Doctors," 1523, the author lays down as the third proposition, "Because the Christian must not love temporal things, therefore he must not swear concerning them." The Parisians had called this immoral and heretical, but the author replies, "Not darkly our Lord has forbidden all use of the oath," and then proceeds to prove from the Scriptures and from the Fathers that this is the correct view. Evangelical views do not tolerate the oath, since every faithful word should be as an oath.<sup>19</sup> The stories of the martyrs all alike confirm their abhorrence of the oath; even under torture they cannot be made to swear one.<sup>20</sup>

Menno Simons had somewhat broader views. He contended that not every oath was absolutely forbidden, but only an oath in temporal affairs.<sup>21</sup> Adam Pastor and his followers again were far more lenient on this point than was Menno; and his views, even though they were those of a heretic, slowly gained the ascendancy among the Anabaptists.

Their views on human government and justice rendered by man were extremely radical. Of course ultimately they were founded again on their literal and individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures. No man was their master but Christ, God alone was the governor, and Paul had specifically warned against seeking justice at the

<sup>18</sup> B. R. N., V, 611.

<sup>19</sup> B. R. N., VI, 503.

<sup>20</sup> B. R. N., II, 91, 363, 505.

<sup>21</sup> B. R. N., II, 495.

hands of outsiders. If judgment was to be rendered, the lowliest of the brethren were competent to do so. They reasoned somewhat in line with Dr. A. Kuyper, in his celebrated "Stone Lectures" on *Calvinism*.

God alone is sovereign. Had sin not entered the world this sovereignty would have been exercised immediately by God. In a sinful world he has delegated it to sinful men, and we must obey them on that account. But all power, whatever it be, is of God.

Rebellion against human governments was possible therefore only among that type of the Anabaptists who dreamed the dream of the restoration of God's immediate government in this world. We have seen how they went about this restoration. Sober counsels brought more sober views.

Says Menno, speaking of the office of the magistrate,<sup>22</sup>

I believe that it is of God, and that it is our duty to revere it, to honor and to obey it, in all things which are not contrary to the Word of God.

Most of the Anabaptists, however, did not tolerate a magistrate to be a member of their communion, on account of the moral and spiritual perils attending such a position. "No Christian shall be a public judge or hold a public office."<sup>23</sup> Menno differed here again from his brethren. He did not refuse membership to magistrates; on the other hand, he admonished them to rule as be-hooves the children of God.<sup>24</sup>

The Dutch Anabaptists, who followed Menno, were a different people from the Münster fanatics, and they wanted the world to know it. Says Jacques, in his "Confession of Faith":<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Schyn, Quoting Menno, *Uitv. Verh.*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> B. R. N., V, 611.

<sup>24</sup> B. R. N., VII, 255.

<sup>25</sup> B. R. N., II, 272.

I confess that the magistrates are instituted and ordained of God, for a punishment of evil-doers, and for the protection of the good. For they do not bear the sword in vain, which magistrates the Scriptures command us to obey.

But they desired religious liberty, such as was guaranteed them shortly after, under the new Republic.

The declaration of faith, put forth by Smyth and Helwys, at Amsterdam, in 1611, and later revised by Smyth, states: <sup>26</sup>

That the magistrate, by virtue of his office, is not to meddle with religion or matters of conscience, nor to compel men to this or that form of religion or doctrine; but to leave the Christian religion to the free conscience of every one, and to meddle only with political matters, i. e., injustice and wrong-doing of one man against another, such as murder, adultery, theft, and the like, because Christ alone is the King and the Lawgiver of the Church and the conscience.

Professor Masson claims that this was the first expression of the absolute principle of liberty of conscience in the public articles of any body of Christians. But the author of "Puritanism" correctly says,<sup>27</sup> that, though it may be the first formulated expression in a confession,

We have evidence that places it beyond a doubt that this principle was apprehended and acted upon by a body of Christians long anterior to the period here referred to.

May I add that this confession of Helwys and Smyth was written in a country, where years before, at the real founding of the Republic, this principle was embodied in the constitution of the country, or rather in the instrument which was destined to become such.

Says the "Union of Utrecht" (of 1579),<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Gregory, "Puritanism," 370.

<sup>27</sup> Idem, 371. <sup>28</sup> Arts. 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

provided always that every individual should remain free in his religion, and that no man should be molested or questioned on the subject of divine worship, as has been already established by the Pacification of Ghent.

The Anabaptists absolutely refused to carry arms or to do military service. They were pacifists in the fullest sense. And this sentiment was found outside of their circle as well. In the account of a disputation held in St. Marks, in the city of Groningen, in 1523, between the Dominicans and the priests of that church, I find these words used,<sup>29</sup> *Quaero si Christiano ullum bellum sit licitum, qui jubetur a Christo et inimicos diligere.*

They were not permitted to use weapons either for their defense or against an enemy, in accordance with the words of Christ, "Thou shalt not resist evil." They carried this principle of non-resistance to such a length that they permitted no merchant among them to carry his goods on an armed vessel, much less to have such a vessel in his possession.

In their earlier days at least, they had neither a specially trained nor a paid ministry. They selected men, in whatever walk of life they might be, who were of good report and well versed in the Scriptures; and to them they committed the cure of their souls. Small wonder—for these preachers after all were human, as we are—that the author of the *Leken Wechweyser* could say of the preachers among sects outside of the bounds of the State Church, unquestionably referring to the Anabaptists,<sup>30</sup> "they are jealous of the evangelical preachers, because they are supported by a fixed annuity and are protected by the magistrate."

<sup>29</sup> B. R. N., VI, 561. "I question whether any war is permissible to a Christian, who is commanded by Christ even to love his enemies."

<sup>30</sup> B. R. N., IV, 335.



The reaction from the Münster tragedy and from the erroristic teachings of Hendrick Niclaes has created among the *Doopsgezinden* a truly Puritanical conception of sexual morality. The Münster experience was past, but not at all forgotten. For generations it remained the nightmare of their life. It seems positively amusing to the present-day historian, delving among these musty records of the past, to see the intensity of their efforts to make the gap between themselves and the Münsterites as wide as possible. Read after Hermannus Schyn, and you will see this effort assumes a form that is almost naive.

The echoes of the Münster enormities were heard in the camps of the followers of Batenburg and Appelman, when the millennial dream still was dreamt and where an antinomian tendency still prevailed.<sup>31</sup> Of all that the *Doopsgezinden* were absolutely free. And yet the women occupied an honored place in their church life. In their churches no musical instruments were found. Why? A logical explanation would seem to be the imposed secrecy of their meetings in the days of persecution, and the enforced restriction of their worship even when they had their religious liberty under the laws of the land. Therefore their places of meeting had no towers, nor bells, nor special ecclesiastical appearance. And therefore, and not because they were on principle against it, they had no organs in their churches.

One more word anent their views of the apostolic succession. This idea, through the latter half of the seventeenth century, so frequently exploited by the English Baptists, or rather a faction among them, was not unknown to the early Anabaptists. Or rather let me say among them also was a faction which exploited this idea.

<sup>31</sup> B. R. N., V, 511.

The author of *Successio Anabaptistica*, a Roman Catholic, but by Doctor Cramer accepted as an absolutely reliable historical witness, tells us:<sup>32</sup>

I am dealing with the Mennonites or Anabaptists, who pride themselves as having the apostolic succession, that is, the mission and extraction from the apostles. Who claim that the true Church is found nowhere, except among themselves alone and in their congregations, since with them alone remains the true understanding of the Scriptures. To that end they appeal to the letter of the S. S. and want to explain them with the S. S. And thus they sell to the simple folks glass rubies for precious stones. . . If one charges them with the newness of their sect, they claim that their "true Church" during the time of the dominion of the Catholic Church, was hidden in her. This contention was specially upheld by Jacob Pieters van der Meulen, teacher of the old Flemish Doopsgezinden at Haarlem, who by the other old Flemish were decried as *Bankroetiers* ("Bankrupts"), because, less strict in the administration of the ban than the others, they had not denied membership to a brother who had become bankrupt.

The idea of an apostolic succession arose then in the second period of the history of the Anabaptists. The Hoffmanites knew nothing of it. And when the reaction of the Münster tragedy set in and the Anabaptists were purified and led to a higher plane, Menno Simons never mentioned it. And Derck Philips knew nothing of it. Van der Meulen apparently started the idea. In the eighteenth century Schyn zealously advocates it and, strange to say, in his elaborate defense of the idea literally expresses some of the words used in the above quotation.

Among Baptist historians, David Benedict, in the middle of the nineteenth century, made a final heroic effort to establish it. The later and more sober and critical

<sup>32</sup> B. R. N., VII, 8, 510.

historians of this great denomination have practically abandoned it. Rome claims apostolic succession, so does the Greek Church and the Church of England, all prelatical bodies in fact.

Protestantism turns its face to the future rather than to the past. So far as the Anabaptists are concerned, it is an exploded theory among the Mennonites of today.

As to the peculiar customs of the early Anabaptists a word will suffice. They are practically all of them reflected in the history of the Puritans, the Brownists, the Quakers, and the Shakers, and similar ecclesiastical developments. Most of them rigidly secluded themselves from all "unbelievers" or "gentiles," as they called all who stood outside of their communion. They regulated the wearing apparel of men and women. The latter reminds us of the heroism of Tertullian, the Church Father, who had the temerity to write on "The Dress of Women." They tried to regulate the manner of walking; how many pleats there might be in a woman's apron; they regulated eating and drinking, both in quantity and quality; the manner of speech, etc. All of this to show non-conformity to the world.<sup>33</sup>

As their horizon expanded and as their social status changed, all these by-products of their religious life slowly disappeared; and in their later history the memory of those earlier strait-jacket days must have humorously affected the susceptible among them.

## 6. Names

We have heretofore used the name Anabaptist, *Dooptgezinden*, *Wederdoopers*, and Mennonites interchangeably. The *Wederdoopers*, or Anabaptists, and the *Dooptgezinden* grew originally from one stem. The distinctive

<sup>33</sup> Nic., *Inl.*, B. R. N., VII, 475.

name *Doopsgezinden* originated through Menno Simon's saving leadership. Their enemies always called them by the generic name Anabaptists. As we have seen, some have tried to reason away the historic connection between the Hoffmanites and the *Doopsgezinden*, but the testimony to the contrary is too strong to be denied. Obbe Philips wrote his "Confession" (*Bekentenisse*) before 1560 and it was printed in 1609, fifty years after his death; and this tract is one of the monumental proofs of the common origin referred to. The names *Doopsgezinden* and Mennonites or *Mennisten* are of early origin. Anastasius Veluanus, having scourged the Anabaptists in his *Leken Wechwyser*, says,<sup>34</sup>

But there are many simple-minded people among them who, with an impeccable walk and peaceful mind, live on in the lack of understanding, namely, the best Mennonites.

As Veluanus wrote in 1554, the name Mennonite was then well known. Note also that he speaks of the followers of Menno as a faction among the Anabaptists.

The *Successio Anabaptistica*, of 1603, uses the name *Doopsgezinde* for Anabaptists.<sup>35</sup> Carel van Ghent, in his *Beginsel der Scheuringen* ("Beginning of Schisms"), 1658, taunts the Anabaptists with their schismatic proclivities and their rebaptizing among themselves, in their various factions, men and women, who went from one faction to another, and says<sup>36</sup> "that for that reason they were justly called *Wederdoopers* ("Anabaptists"). In the middle of the seventeenth century they were then generically known as *Wederdoopers*. But Alenson, in his *Tegenbericht* of 1626, mentions the fact that the Frisians,

<sup>34</sup> B. R. N., IV, 203.

<sup>35</sup> B. R. N., VII, 44.

<sup>36</sup> B. R. N., VII, 525.

in their articles of faith of 1626, on the title of the document call themselves Mennonites, and that from that time they were thus called.<sup>37</sup> And King John Casimir of Poland, in his letter of 1660, calls them repeatedly Mennonites and "Minists," so that they were evidently called by that name in Poland.

From which we may conclude that all these names were used interchangeably in the seventeenth century according to different locations or to the preference of the Anabaptist factions in giving themselves a name.

As we shall see, even in the eighteenth century the names *Mennoniten* and *Doopsgezinden* were still contending for the mastery. Anabaptist then is the generic name for the whole sect.

### 7. *An Analytical Sketch of Their Church Life in the Eighteenth Century*

Now and then a book is written which escapes the ravages of time. The contemporaries of the author may have frowned upon it, perhaps it was little read in its day. The readers perchance called the author dry, too lengthy, too circumstantial—what not. Time rolled on, and men asked themselves what a certain thing was exactly like at a certain time, and they found our author and blessed him for his tedious, painstaking labor and for the minuteness of his portrayal of things.

How little we would know of the true inwardness of the history of the Dutch Anabaptists in the eighteenth century, were it not for the unspeakable minuteness and agonizing accuracy of detail and infinite patience of a German, who came to Holland to study these Anabaptists *in situ*. His name was Frederick Rues. The title of his book was *Tegenwoordige Staet der Doopsgezinden of*

<sup>37</sup> B. R. N., VII, 242.

*Mennoniten, in de Vereenigde Nederlanden* ("Present Condition of the Doopsgezinden or Mennonites in the United Netherlands"), 1745. I presume the book is extant in German. I read the Dutch translation, which is said to be rare, and is counted by the Baptist Seminary Library of Louisville, Kentucky, among its "treasures." And thanks to that book, we are able to get a satisfactory view of the Dutch Anabaptists in the eighteenth century, and we are enabled to study them in detail.

In addition to the above, another work was kindly loaned to me by my colleagues of the Baptist Seminary at Louisville, *Uitvoeriger Verhandeling van de geschiedenissen der Mennoniten, van Hermannus Schyn, 1744*, which adds a great deal to the information given by Rues. Alas the time was too short to send for additional literature to other libraries and to the Netherlands. But these works suffice for the purpose in hand. They give us a clear idea of the advancement, in every respect, made by the *Doopsgezinden*, since the time of their wildly schismatic behavior in the later years of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century.

In Holland they had obtained religious freedom and a civil status—the right of citizenship—in 1672. But neither England, Switzerland, nor Germany was as yet willing to give them the same privileges. There the *Doopsgezinden* were still identified with the old rebellious Anabaptists, whose enormities were still fresh in the minds of the magistrates. Their refusal of the oath and their denial of church-membership to magistrates of every description, may have had a great deal to do with this.

By 1630 the mass of the Flemings, Germans, and Waterlandians had entered into an elastic union at Amsterdam, without, however, wholly renouncing their individual tenets. Nine years later the Germans and Flem-



ings came still closer, and thus the position of the Waterlandians became a commanding one. The main division now lay between the remnant of the Flemings and Frisians, unwilling to enter the union, and the Waterlandians. The former were called the *Fine*, as in my young days members of the Free Church of Holland, in Vriesland were still called, and the *Coarse*. The former were strict in all their ancient tenets, the latter were more lax and inclined to liberalism. Within these two great groups, however, there were still endless varieties, mostly on minor points of doctrine and practise. The *Fine* held more closely to the doctrines and practise of Menno, they still clung to his views on the incarnation, the ban, etc., and some of them were foot-washers. Individualism, as we have seen, from the beginning had been the bane of the Anabaptist movement. It kept them forever decentralized, it created circles within circles and prevented them from becoming a large and impressive body, with commanding national influence. One of the minor sects of the *Fine* was that of the *Uke-Wallists*, named after Uke Wallis. Unlettered and unrefined, he yet obtained a considerable following. He was exiled from the city of Groningen, in 1637, because he taught the old, familiar early patristic idea that Judas Iscariot and the other persecutors of Christ might be saved. Removing to East Frisia, he founded his own church, of which remnants still are said to exist. They were, in the eighteenth century, a separate folk, rebaptizing every one who entered their communion. They abhorred elegance in dress or any ornaments; their dress was of the plainest, both for men and women. All men wore beards. Their aspect was gloomy and austere. Their homes were of the humblest, even though they had the means to live better, and they strictly adhered to the rite of foot-washing.

The *Coarse* had two main divisions, the Frisians and the Waterlandians, and among these another serious schism arose, that of the *Gallenists* and *Apostoolians*, thus named after their party leaders.

The Arminian controversy, as a matter of course, had deeply affected the always impressionable *Doopsgezinden*. The aftermath came in the creation of a new sect, the so-called *Collegiants*, of whom I will speak later. They were a body so totally disorganized, so absolutely individualistic, with doctrinal opinions so loose and disjointed that a subtle affinity was felt, from the very beginning, between them and the *Doopsgezinden*. And they exercised a considerable influence on the later Anabaptistic developments in Holland.<sup>38</sup> In the latter half of the century, the position of the *Doopsgezinden* in Amsterdam had become influential in every way.

The Flemish party there had two celebrated pastors. The one was Galenus De Haan, a man full of spiritual power and of a personality both imposing and attractive. He came in touch with the *Collegiants* and took part in their prophesyings. He was a scholarly man, well trained in Greek and Latin, a graduate of the medical department at the University of Leyden, and practised medicine in Amsterdam, according to the Anabaptist custom, in addition to his pastorate. Beyond all this he conducted a training-school for young ministers. His contemporaries say that, true to the fundamental ideas of the Anabaptists, he accentuated life at the expense of doctrine, and taught a very liberal theology. Once sure of his own position, he laid down his views in nineteen articles, which he sent to the Consistory—our session—and then published them.

The church where he and his colleague preached, had

<sup>38</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 134.

the image of a *Lamb* above the door, and thus those who worshiped there were called "Lammists."<sup>39</sup> His colleague, Samuel Apostool, also a man of great power and influence, was of entirely different opinions. Conservative and tenacious of purpose, perhaps a little irked at the greater popularity of De Haan, he organized a party of opposition. He maintained that the Church should stand by the Confession of Hans de Ries and Lubbert Gerrits, mentioned above. De Haan wanted only the Scriptures, with a free interpretation thereof. In addition the old questions were revived, about the divinity of Christ, his two natures, and the three persons in the Godhead.<sup>40</sup>

For five years the tension steadily increased and the acrimonious debates continued. The measure was full in 1664, and the expected disruption occurred.

Samuel Apostool and two other leaders separated, with seven hundred members of the church, and swarmed to another hive, which received the sign of the *Sun* over its door, and thus the "Lammists" and "Sunnists" were born among the descendants of the Dutch Anabaptists.

Galenus De Haan, with some three hundred members, retained the property of the original church, after the courts, in defiance of ancient Anabaptist principles, had decided the matter. The Sunnists made the signing of the Confession, mentioned above, obligatory on its pastors and members and had no touch with the Collegiants. The Lammists rejected all confessions and were hand and fist with the Collegiant propaganda. The split passed from Amsterdam through the entire country, and thus the Coarse *Doopsgezinden* were split again into two mutually hostile camps.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Idem, 144.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, 145.

<sup>41</sup> Idem, 146.

A vain effort at reunion was made in 1672, but the views of the antagonistic factions were too heterogenous for the realization of the hopes of the Unionists. In certain localities, as in Zaandam, in 1687, and at Rotterdam and Leyden, in 1700, local unions were effected, but the main bodies remained apart for the present.<sup>42</sup> True union was to come later. Thus the eighteenth century opened, with a divided life.<sup>43</sup>

In the analytical sketch of the inner conditions of these two great groups of churches among the *Doopsgezinden* of the Netherlands, which follows, I will follow Simeon Frederick Rues. (I make no special page-references to this painstaking outline,<sup>44</sup> except in cases of special interest and refer the reader to the book as a whole.) No more circumstantial and painstaking account of the condition of the *Doopsgezinden* in the Lowlands, in the eighteenth century, has come down to us, than this work, somewhat rare today. The great outburst of schismatic fury had spent its force and, although split again into two main groups of churches, there was no longer the bitterness and mutual condemnation which had characterized the past. Wherever they were, they recognized the fundamental oneness of their divided life. And that was a vast improvement.

From this work of Rues, written in the true German style, with an eye to infinite details, we obtain a *coup d'oeil* of the conditions, customs, worship, social standing, church organization, etc., obtaining, in this century, among the *Doopsgezinden* of Holland; and, in the main, they remain unchanged till this day.

The old distinction between the *Fine* and the *Coarse* still was made. The Fine were very fond of calling them-

<sup>42</sup> Idem, 146.      <sup>43</sup> Schyn, *Uitv. Verh.* 79, 83.

<sup>44</sup> *Tegenwoordige Staet der Doopsgezinden.*

selves *Mennonites*; the Coarse, who had largely abandoned the theological foundation of Menno, preferred the name *Doopsgezinden*, and so called themselves. As we have seen, the first great schism originated in Vriesland. The strictest part were therefore called Frisians, from the Province where the storm first broke out. The Old Flemings joined themselves to this party. The Waterlandians, whose home was, in the main, in the marshy region of North Holland, stood between this strictest party and the Flemings or New Flemings, who joined the conciliatory party. Both parties alike hated the Waterlandians, who by degrees grew more lax in doctrine and life than others. In time, however, the milder Frisians and Flemings, together with the so-called German Mennonites, refugees from Germany, drew toward the Waterlandians, and this coalition shortly formed the predominating party among the *Doopsgezinden*.

The smaller conservative party then adopted the name Old Flemings; but among themselves again they were divided into a number of smaller sects, without any intercommunication with each other. Their main divisions were the Dantzigers and Groningers, thus named from the places where they developed their main strength.

The Coarse party, coming in more continuous contact with the world, by degrees developed a taste for the sciences, for culture in general, and for an educated ministry.

All these distinctions and combinations are entirely apart from the schism between the Sunnists and Lam-mists, of which I spoke a little way back, which developed only among the Coarse. They were the inheritance of the past and formed the background on which the picture of the life of the *Doopsgezinden* in the eighteenth century is painted.

The Fine party again were divided into these general classes: the Very Finest (*Allerfynsten*), whose rigorous way of living and somber dress marked them everywhere; the Dantzigers, who were a tiny bit more lenient, both in doctrine and life; and the Groningers, who besides this greater leniency had somewhat different ecclesiastical customs from the others. But all together they were classified as Fine Mennonites.

Now what were their doctrinal views?

1. They clung to the confessions of faith, which, in the sixteenth century and later, were adopted by the *Doopsgezinden*.

2. They followed Menno Simons implicitly.

3. They adopted the doctrine of the Trinity, professed by the universal Christian church; but they denied the propriety of the word *persona*.

4. They held the peculiar Christological views of Menno.

5. They rebaptized all those who had been baptized in infancy and also those who joined them from Anabaptist bodies other than their own.

6. They practised foot-washing. The Dantzigers washed the feet of the bishop only, and the housefather or housemother extended this, as a courtesy of welcome, to the guest who came to their home, especially if such a guest came with the purpose of joining the congregation. The father washed the feet of men, the mother those of women. The Groningers, on the other hand, made this ceremony a part of their administration of the Lord's Supper, the sexes being wholly separated in the exercise of this part of worship.

7. They did not tolerate any one who held a public office as a member of their churches.

8. They all absolutely rejected the oath.



9. They believed in passive obedience and forbade their members to bear any arms or ever to use them.

10. The Finest would not enter any court of justice under any circumstances, nor seek redress there for any injury. The Groningers receded from this extreme view.

11. They had ministers or elders and deacons in their churches.

Their religious teachers were of two kinds. Besides the bishops or elders, who alone administered the sacraments, they had a sort of adjunct pastors, who preached, but were not permitted to do anything of a strictly official character. The deacons held office for life. No preacher from any body of Christians other than their own peculiar sect, was permitted to enter their pulpits. No baptism was deemed efficient, except when administered by one who had been ordained by one of their own bishops or pastors, and so on. Hence many of them doubted the validity of the mission and baptism of Menno Simons, who had been baptized by Obbe Philips. For, both according to the *Inlasschingen* of Nicolai<sup>45</sup> and the *Protocol van de discussie te Leeuwarden*, 1597, this is an incontrovertible fact. Menno never mentions it. Perhaps because later, when rebaptism became more common, the fact that he had been baptized by a disciple of Jan Mathysz, or at least had his official derivation from one who later on proved a renegade and was called "a Demas" by himself, might have cast a cloud over his baptism. This fear was realized, as we see, long after his death.

12. They were, one and all, very strict in the application of the ban. The Dantzigers went so far as to believe that the carrying of side-arms (the usual thing for a gentleman in those days, as we carry a cane), the em-

<sup>45</sup> B. R. N.. VII. 362. 461.

ployment of an armed vessel for merchandise, a marriage to one of another denomination, luxury in dress or home life, or the impropriety of having one's portrait painted—that all of these were sins deserving of excommunication. In Prussia even the wearing of a wig, in those bewigged days, was an excommunicable offense.

The Very Fine wore no buttons on their garments, neither silver nor gold ornaments, no buckles on their knee-breeches or shoes. What a life! By slow degrees, especially in the cities, this strenuousness was somewhat ameliorated.

All contact with excommunicates was forbidden and, in accordance with the later doctrine of Derck Philips and Menno Simons, married people of whom one was an excommunicate, were compelled to maintain an absolute avoidance.

The Groningers always dressed in simple black, the men wore long beards and shaving or hair-cutting was deemed a sign of worldliness. On the whole, however, in every respect, they were more lenient than the others. All of them, the Groningers excepted, forbade intermarriage with people of other churches, even though they belonged to the groups of the Fine.

They cared little for culture or book-learning. So long as their pastors "were taught of God," that sufficed them. They stood alone and refused intercourse with any other Christian or Anabaptist sect. They alone were the true Church, and whosoever would enter it must seek such entrance by submitting to rebaptism. They surely deserved the name "Anabaptist."

It may be of interest to study them somewhat more closely and to look into their organization and worship.

All power rested with the male members of the church. Women had no vote, nor were they permitted to speak in

their churches. The elders, or bishops, and the other teachers and deacons formed the Consistory, which was merely an administrative body. Everything that was of common interest must be brought before the council of all the male members.<sup>46</sup> The preachers were dressed soberly, but like other gentlemen. They were seated in armchairs, on a platform, facing the door of the meeting-house. The taller chair, in the center of the row, was for the preacher of the occasion. A precentor led the singing, without any instrumental accompaniment. They sang only Psalms in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. During the first singing the ministers entered the church and seated themselves.

The minister preached, seated in his chair. Prayer was made kneeling, but in absolute silence. The minister outlined, before the prayer was made, the objects of special attention. Strange that in our recent evangelistic methods we have returned again to this ancient custom.<sup>47</sup> In the meeting no collection was taken. The gifts of the faithful were placed in a box at the door as the congregation dispersed. They had no classes for catechetical instruction, as among the Reformed churches, perhaps on account of their antipathy to symbolized doctrine, their own being very indefinite. Of prayer-meetings they knew nothing. Even at home their prayers were always silent.

How did they administer the sacraments?

We have studied their theory of these sacraments; what was their practise? Rues was an eye-witness, and he tells his story in such a vivid way that we can see, even across the centuries, what actually transpired.

We are still considering that party of the Anabaptists or *Doopsgesinden* called the Fine in distinction from the

<sup>46</sup> *Tegenw. Staet.*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> *Idem*, 41 p.

Coarse. They baptized eight days before communion. The new candidates were examined by the preachers, or preferably they handed in a written confession of their faith. The people were asked whether there was any objection against the candidates. If not, the minister made an address, setting forth, in general terms, the faith of the *Doopsgesinden*; after which the candidates were requested to stand before the pulpit. They were then asked: (1) Whether they were truly penitent for all their sins, sought salvation in God's mercy alone, and were willing to fight against sin; (2) whether they believed in the articles of the Apostolic Confession (the descent to hell excepted); (3) whether they believed the doctrine expounded by the pastor in his address, and whether they promised to abide in it. The speaker then said: "God gave to Jesus Christ a name, in which every knee must be bowed. Be pleased therefore to kneel down before the presence of your great Saviour." He then made a heart-searching address to the candidates and to the congregation, recommending the new members to their prayers. He then took from beneath his chair a stone jar, filled with water, kept it in his left hand, placing his right on the head of the candidate and said, "I baptize thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." As he spoke the formula he tilted the jar *thrice* over the head of the candidate, so that the water flowed down his forehead. In the baptism of women, the cap was shoved back a little. The new members were then welcomed into the church with a kiss of brotherly love. All the teachers and preachers on the platform did likewise. Then the benediction was pronounced.<sup>48</sup>

At communion they had silent prayer, as always, and

<sup>48</sup> *Tegenw. Staet*, 45 p.

the usual sermon was preached. After the sermon, the bishop went to a table covered with white, on which stood some small loaves of bread and some cups. Wine, in bottles, stood on the floor by the table. Everything as rigidly simple and unritualistic as may well be imagined. He took one of the small loaves and spoke the first words of the institution, in a dead silence of the whole congregation. Usually a few words regarding the Supper were here introduced. He then broke off a piece of the loaf in his hand, and gave it to the pastor sitting next to him. Then he passed through the place of meeting and, breaking off pieces of bread, passed them to all the communicants, a deacon closely following with a basket of loaves. Then, as now, the question was asked whether any one had been passed in the distribution of the bread. They did not eat their bread but, with silent prayer, kept it in their hands till all were served. Only then they ate, literally in *holy communion*. The same proceeding was followed with the cup. Again a silent prayer, a brief address, and the speaking of the words of the institution. The bishop or minister ate and drank first, the others after him. The deacons carried the cups to different parts of the church, so that all were quickly served.

Surely the administration of the sacraments was a solemn affair to these Old Flemings. The Dantzigers held communion at stated times, usually every three or four months; the Groningers only, when no members had any trouble of any kind with another. As may be imagined, the Supper was but rarely administered among the latter. Foot-washing, if practised at all, accompanied communion.<sup>49</sup>

As to their pastors, they had no trained ministry. No man could become pastor or teacher till he had been a

<sup>49</sup> *Tegenw. Staet.*, 45 p. 53.



deacon. If a vacancy occurred, the church elected a pastor by a majority vote, and he at once began his work without any further ado. No ordination was required. Usually the pastors were chosen from the teachers. A candidate for this latter office was examined by two pastors and, if accepted, at once began preaching, when the occasion required.

If one was elected elder or bishop, he was given time for consideration. If he accepted, another elder preached a sermon, after which the candidate knelt down, and he imposed his hands. It was all simplicity itself. These Old Flemish were extremely democratic in church affairs. Their marriage ceremony consisted in a notification of intention to the bishop and an appearance before the church. Again a silent prayer, as on all occasions. Then the couple were called forward and they were asked whether they desired to be married. Of course they answered, Yes. Then followed a brief exposition of the married estate; then another question whether, after this exposition, they still persisted in their purpose. Then a hand-clasp, a silent prayer, a trip to the town hall for civic enrolment, and all was over. The latter had to be done, since the Reformed Church alone had the *jus civilis*, or the right of keeping a marriage register, so that the members of the State Church were spared the double ceremony.

The Fine were far less efficiently organized than the Coarse. They had poorer buildings and no orphan asylums of their own, but paid individuals for the rearing of their orphans. In the eighteenth century, the Groningers had fifteen churches in the province of Groningen, four in Overysel, and four in Vriesland. All these met, from time to time for conference, in the city of Groningen.

The other Old Flemings had in Groningen only two



churches, four in Overysel, eight in Vriesland, and five in Holland.

There was no paid ministry among the Fine. Their pastors or bishops were laboring men or small traders. Within the circle of the Old Flemings in the eighteenth century, yet scarcely identified with it, was a small group, the followers of Jan Jacobs Volk, called the *Jan Jacobsgezinden*. They were somewhat more liberal than the regular Fine *Doopsgezinden*, rejecting foot-washing and permitting preachers of other churches to enter their pulpits. And more than that, they permitted marriage with members of other groups of *Doopsgezinden*, and even called pastors of churches other than their own.

The Coarse *Doopsgezinden* had by far the greatest strength, not because they were actually homogeneous, but because they had simply agreed no longer to disagree.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Rues mentions among them the following parties:<sup>50</sup> Waterlandians, Flemings, Frisians; United Frisians and Waterlandians; United Flemings and Frisians; United Flemings, Frisians and Germans; United Waterlandians, Flemings, and Frisians. Quite a kaleidoscopic aspect of things! But he was able to add<sup>51</sup> that notwithstanding all these names,

for about eighty years, there were only two chief parties, Frisians and Waterlandians, with the latter of whom were also counted the Flemings, the United Flemish, and the Waterlandian Congregations.

The Waterlandians were spread over the whole country, whilst the Frisians were only found in North Holland and West Frisia. The Frisians had a well-attended annual synod and even in case of a union between a

<sup>50</sup> *Tegenw. Staet*, 75.

Idem.

Waterlandian and a Frisian congregation, the latter still kept up its contact with this meeting. The church life of the *Doopsgezinden* was therefore as free and untrammelled by any human ordinances as could be imagined.

The Coarse, though liberal, came closer to the common Protestant symbolical faith than the Fine, excepting the four main characteristics of all Anabaptists—adult baptism, and the common views on the office of the magistrate, the use of arms, and the oath. But the Arminian and Socinian developments of the early part of the seventeenth century, as we have seen, in their influence on the *Doopsgezinden*, caused another main division among them which, however, affected the Coarse party only.

The Sunnists and Lammists split this entire wing of the Mennonites into two bitterly hostile camps.

The followers of Galenus de Haan were originally greatly outnumbered by the Conservatives, under Samuel Apostool, and for a while it seemed as if the Sunnists would triumph completely over the Lammists.

But the fact that Galenus retained the old property, the church endeared to the *Doopsgezinden* by many memories, the personal magnetism of his leadership, the love of learning and culture displayed by his followers, and the great wealth of the party which remained with him—all this soon gave the Lammists, weaker as they originally were, a strong lead over their opponents. The followers of De Haan rejected the name Mennonites and always called themselves *Doopsgezinden*; those of Apostool, on the other hand, standing much closer to Menno in doctrine and practise, preferred the name Mennonite.

Rues therefore distinguishes them as the *Remonstrant Doopsgezinden* and *Mennonite Doopsgezinden*.

As to their doctrinal position:

The Frisians as well as the Mennonite Waterlandians,

the Flemings, and the United Congregations, all stood by the confessions of the earlier Anabaptists and bound their members, on their baptism, to these doctrines. They also demanded of their preachers adhesion to them.

Let me recapitulate them :

1. That of the Waterlandians of 1581.
2. That of the Frisians, not adopted by the churches, but written by Peter Jans Twisk, in 1617.
3. Two German Confessions, (a) the Concept of Cologne, 1591, (b) the Confession of Jan Centsen, 1630.
4. The Flemish Confessions of (a) Jacques Outerman, 1626, and (b) *Het Olyftakje* (mentioned above), of 1629, and (c) the Confession of Adriaan Cornelis van Dordrecht, 1632, the basis of union for most of the Flemish churches.

The Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden* rejected all of these and considered all confessions, in the main, as a violation of conscience. The Bible, they claimed, was enough confession for them. Finally a sort of compromise was effected among them, and on September 26, 1647, they accepted the Confession of Hans De Ries of 1581, in a meeting of Waterlandian pastors and deacons, as a basis of union, but with this proviso,<sup>52</sup> "that the Confession was not to be placed above the Word of God, as a precise rule of faith."

Let us understand, however, that the Waterlandians never bound themselves to any confession, and that that of Hans de Ries was considered only as a personal statement of himself and church.

Some of the United Flemish and Waterlandians rejected both the name *Doopsgezinden* and Mennonites, and insisted on being called Christians. The American denomination of that name may or may not be aware of

<sup>52</sup> *Tegenw. Staet.*, 8a.

the fact that these ancient Dutchmen preempted their title to the name Christians. It is worthy of note that both in respect to baptism and anticonfessional attitude, as well as in name, these *Doopsgezinden* of the seventeenth century occupied the identical position of our "Christian" denomination today.

Like their brethren in Frisia, all the Mennonite Frisians held the evangelical view of the Trinity, but they rejected, like the Fine, the name "person."

Wholly unlike the Fine, they absolutely rejected the Mennonite doctrine of the incarnation, and they considered the sacraments as "signs and seals of grace imparted."<sup>53</sup>

The Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden* followed the doctrine of the Arminians in regard to grace and salvation, also as regards the sacraments, and went even beyond them in their low valuation.

Not one pastor of the Coarse party rebaptized those who came from other Anabaptist sects, when they had been baptized as adults. Some even went so far as to recognize infant baptism and to require of those baptized in infancy only a sort of confirmation.<sup>54</sup> This, however, was wholly confined to the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden*.

The Waterlandians and Frisians or Mennonite *Doopsgezinden* did not admit any one to the Lord's table who did not believe as they did, and therefore their table was closed against all Protestants and all *Doopsgezinden* who did not subscribe to their confessions.

The Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden*, on the other hand, claimed that "the table of the Lord was open to all those who were guided by the Word of God and walked circumspectly."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Tegenw. Staet.*, 93.

<sup>54</sup> *Idem*, 94.

<sup>55</sup> *Idem*, 95.

And thus they received members of other churches as "guests" at their communion table.

All the Coarse *Doopsgezinden* abolished foot-washing. They even permitted their members to be magistrates and thus differed *in toto* from the Fine. Nay, as regards the oath, the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden*, in the eighteenth century, had considerably changed their views, and they permitted the oath of confirmation, but still interdicted that which bound one for the future.<sup>56</sup> As to the matter of resistance, the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden*, in the eighteenth century, called themselves *Wraekelooze Christensen*, ("unavenging Christians"). As to arms and their use, they permitted their defensive use, but forbade their offensive use.

Their men therefore bore side-arms and permitted trade on armed vessels. They had evidently traveled many a league from the trodden path of ancient Anabaptist views and had relinquished many of the old fundamentals.

They were more bureaucratic and aristocratic than the Fine. The power of the membership among the Coarse had been largely transferred to the consistory or church board. The latter body decided everything and unless there arose opposition on the part of the congregation, this settled a matter finally. In this regard they adopted the polity of the Dutch Reformed (State) Church.

As regards the ban, they were far milder than the Fine. Only great sins were punished by excommunication. The Frisian and Mennonite Waterlandians included heresy in this category, the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden* rejected this view. Liberal without limitation themselves, how could they ban one for heresy? And what, pray, was heresy? They claimed that unity cannot be broken by a difference in the expression of faith. They utterly

<sup>56</sup> Idem, 97.



abandoned the old cruel position of avoidance under the ban. They permitted mixed marriages even with Catholics. The entire Coarse party magnified intellectual training, especially for their ministry. This was especially so among the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden*.

All of them believed that the Church revealed itself in other branches of Christendom, as well as in their own churches, and hence they maintained constant intercourse with other Christians. They were therefore as far removed from the Fine, or from the old Anabaptists, as the south pole is removed from the north pole. In fact, the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden* had for their motto,<sup>57</sup> "Not holiness but tolerance is the privilege of the Church."

As to their church polity, all the powers of the congregation were vested and centralized in the consistory. It consisted of the ministers, ministerial candidates (*proponenten*), and deacons. Their number varied, according to the opulence of the church. An act of the consistory became binding by the assent of the church. The preachers were salaried, and even the ministerial candidates, in Amsterdam, received three hundred guilders per annum. Ministers dressed in gown and bands, like the ministers of the State Church, and the candidates imitated their dress as closely as their means warranted. In Amsterdam all deacons, officiating at the services of the church, were dressed in black and wore bands.

Among the Frisians, the deacons served for life; among the others, for a fixed period, usually from five to seven years, after which an equal period had to elapse before reelection was possible.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden* in Amsterdam maintained a professor of theology for the training of young ministers, at

<sup>57</sup> Idem, 105.



a stipend of two thousand guilders ; for that time an enormous salary.

The Mennonite Waterlandians and Flemings refused to support this new departure. They demanded assurance as to the character of theology taught, and moreover they still followed, at least for the greater part, the ancient Anabaptist custom of a self-supporting ministry, uncontaminated by the breath of the schools. The salaries of the Amsterdam pastors were large for that day, running between one thousand two hundred and two thousand guilders.

As to their worship, it is curious to notice how, in the cities at least, the *Dooptgezinden* had adopted customs and manners of address and external forms from the State Church, whose overpowering and killing influence was felt by them everywhere in the land. Their pastors therefore were called "domine" as in the State Church. They appeared in the pulpit in gown and bands, a custom forbidden by the more conservative Frisians. Their churches had high pulpits like the State churches. The consistory, here as there, was seated in an enclosed space, on each side of the pulpit. The precentor opened the meeting, and the pastors and consistory entered the church during this singing. In Amsterdam they had even borrowed from the State Church the office of catechist, for the teaching of their children in the faith of the Church.

All prayers were audible, made by the pastor. The collection was made in conventional black velvet bags on a long stick, having a tinkling little bell in the pendant tassel, to remind the drowsy church-member of the fact that the time for making his offering was at hand.

As to the sacraments, they followed practically the same method we have observed among the Fine *Weder-*

*doopers*, with some slight differences. The same announcement of the names of the candidates for baptism was made from the pulpit; the same address was made, and the same questions were asked. The candidate kneeled before the ministers here as there, but the jar of water was absent. In its place was a little stool-like table, with a silver basin on it. In the administration of baptism the minister formed his two hands into a cup, and dipping them in the vessel standing on the stand or held by another minister, he poured the full contents of the hands on the head of the candidate, as he was pronouncing the usual formula. Young people, i. e., very young people, were rarely baptized. Eighteen or twenty years was considered a very early time of life for baptism. They not rarely waited till they were forty or fifty.<sup>58</sup>

The only cases of immersion among the Anabaptists of Holland we find, in the eighteenth century, among the Remonstrant *Dooptgezinden*. Like the English Baptists, they had come in contact with the Collegiants, and their pastors, or at least some of them, as today among the Presbyterians, were willing to immerse a candidate for baptism, if he insisted on being baptized by this mode. Says Rues: <sup>59</sup>

In such a case they go with him to a dyeing establishment, and a tub is filled with tepid water. The candidate appears in his nether garments and passes into the tub, where the baptizer dips him under the water, following the usual ritual.

Such cases were confined to people who were influenced by the Collegiants, who were strongly represented at Amsterdam. The latter immersed and impressed their

<sup>58</sup> Idem, 135.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, 136.

hearers with the necessity of this kind of baptism. As no one was ever rebaptized after having received adult baptism by the Coarse *Doopsgezinden*, they totally rejected the name *Wederdoopers*. Strange to say the Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden*, the followers of De Haan, so liberal in every other way, made an exception of people baptized by the Collegiants and rebaptized them by sprinkling. Why?

They rejected their baptism, though they were willing, if people desired it, to follow their mode of baptism, "because these people are baptized by men who have no mission (*zending*) and who are not in the public ministry of the Word, in any Church."<sup>60</sup> One of the fundamental points of the Collegiant organization was the denial of the rights of an ordained ministry.

In the administration of the Lord's Supper, they followed on the whole the same customs as the Fine. The Mennonite *Doopsgezinden* admitted only those who were baptized on confession, and therefore the officiating minister required all not thus qualified to abstain from participating. The Remonstrant *Doopsgezinden* were far more liberal and invited all who believed in Christ as their Saviour, whether as members or as "guests." In the Flemish and Frisian churches, the elements were passed among the communicants, in their seats. Among the Waterlandians, they came to a table spread with fine linen, before the pulpit, at which from eighteen to twenty members could commune at a time. It was filled and refilled till all were served. The same custom as among the Fine obtained, i. e., of retaining the bread till all were served and then eating it together. When there was no table, the deacons served the wine, after the pastor had served the bread, and to that end jugs of wine were

<sup>60</sup> Idem, 138.

carried around the church to refill the cups as they were emptied. From which one may conclude that they were as literal here as in their exegesis of the rest of Scripture. "*Drink*" meant *drink* and not *sip* to them. During communion, people sang or appropriate passages of Scripture were read.<sup>61</sup>

Communion was held twice, thrice, in some cases five or six times a year. The consistory examined candidates for the ministry, and they were ordained by the pastor or pastors, with the laying on of hands.<sup>62</sup>

The Frisians did not examine, but simply ordained after hearing the confession of faith of the candidate for the ministry. Most of the Coarse *Doopsgezinden* left marriage to the State and had no ecclesiastical ceremony.<sup>63</sup> They had no burial services in their churches. Only in the case of a pastor, a memorial sermon was preached in his honor, some weeks later.<sup>64</sup> Every pastor was obliged at least once a year to make a true pastoral visit in every family of the church (*Huisbezoeking*), a custom probably derived from the State Church, where it still prevails, as well as among all Reformed Churches of Dutch origin.

The churches held annual meetings, but these so-called "synods" were mere conventions and were not judicatories in any sense. They had only advisory power and could not enforce anything on which they resolved.<sup>65</sup> But in the middle of the eighteenth century the *Doopsgezinden* occupied a considerable position in the church life of Holland. Well might Rues say: <sup>66</sup>

The *Doopsgezinden* in the Netherlands are an imposing denomination of Christians and, yes we may say, of the Protestant

<sup>61</sup> Idem, 139 p.

<sup>64</sup> Idem, 157.

<sup>62</sup> Idem, 148.

<sup>65</sup> Idem, 172.

<sup>63</sup> Idem, 152.

<sup>66</sup> Idem, 183.

Church. In the domain of the United Netherlands, I have counted one hundred and ninety-seven churches, taking the two powerful divisions and the minor sects together. And they had among them more than four hundred pastors.

In the province of Holland he found seventy-seven, in Vriesland, sixty-one churches. But even then they were dying. Their internal divisions and their growing liberalism were sapping their strength. And their lack of real organization made them an easy prey for every invading force. Then as now, young people went to the fashionable rather than to the despised church. And thus the defections were more numerous as their strictness of life and morals decreased. Rues tells us they were <sup>67</sup>

counted among the wealthiest in the country. . . If they had been compelled to leave the land, the wealth and commerce of this country would receive a very serious check. . . They love the show of vanity of this world as much as any people ever could do, and they are able to enforce whatever want with their money.

Not an imposing picture. And Rues was an observant, but wholly objective witness.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, 184.

## VI

### LATER HISTORY

"It is a long lane that has no turning;" it is a longer one that has no end.

Have I succeeded in arousing your interest in this strange by-product of the Reformation? The ideas prevailing concerning it hitherto have been so vague; our best encyclopedias depend for their scant information, not on original study of the remaining literature of the Anabaptists, but on what others have said about them. And since the sources until recently were so widely scattered, so hopelessly inaccessible, and withal so few, do we wonder that our information should be cloudy and superficial?

We are informed by the authors of the *Bibliotheca* that their aim in collecting and publishing these priceless documents of antiquity was twofold: first, their preservation; and secondly, that they might blaze out a way along which the historian may walk in his search for information concerning the Anabaptist development, in the age of the Reformation and in subsequent times.<sup>1</sup> We are now ready to study these strange people in the Lowlands, in the later periods of their history, and to see how their past has continually dominated various issues in their history as they presented themselves.

A child is born generations before it sees the light of day, for the law of heredity asserts itself in its life; and the same is true in the life of the church as an organism.

<sup>1</sup> B, R. N., I, Intr,



### 1. *Strength of the Mennonites in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*

During the seventeenth century it became evident that men of considerable talent were to be found among the rank and file of the Mennonites. And they were not confined to one learned profession or to one social stratum. There were physicians of more than local reputation: men like A. J. Roscius, doctor of medicine and preacher at Hoorn; the celebrated Bidloo brothers, one of whom was body-physician to Peter the Great, Czar of Russia, and the other similarly employed at the court of Prince William III of the Netherlands. Another of these famous Mennonite doctors was Galenus de Haan, whom we have met before, who was equally celebrated as preacher and practitioner of medicine at Amsterdam; and especially A. C. Van Dale, whose works on the science of healing made him a European celebrity.

Among the men of letters I mention J. P. Schabalje, preacher at Alkmaar, renowned as scholar and poet. So far as is known, he was the first to write a "Life of Christ."

We find poets among them like J. A. van der Goes, celebrated by his *Ystroom*, and Karel van Mander, translator of Virgil and of the *Iliad*.

In the world of art they boasted a Mierevelt, especially Ruysdael, the greatest of Dutch landscape-painters, and greatest of all perhaps, Rembrandt. For science they could claim J. A. Leeghwater, who drew the plans for the reclamation of Haarlem lake, a marvelous engineering problem; and J. van der Heyden, who first undertook the illumination of the streets of Amsterdam, and who was the inventor of the prototype of the modern fire-engine.

Before the close of the seventeenth century the Frisian

Society was formed, which still exists, whose final aims were the promotion of unity and peace among the *Doopsgezinden*, the assistance of needy and mostly still unsalaried ministers, and kindred objects. Forty-seven churches in Vriesland joined this Society. The province of Groningen followed this example, by establishing a similar society, with similar aims, to which was added the maintenance of the ancient purity of life and the propagation of the ancient doctrines of the sect. This aggregate embraced forty churches.<sup>2</sup>

For it was felt, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, that the entire brotherhood would perish, if the progress of liberalism in the Mennonite churches was not checked. The Groninger society had sounded a note of warning in this direction and, in 1701, Lambertus Bidloo issued his vigorous tract, "Unlimited Tolerance the Ruin of the Doopsgezinden."<sup>3</sup>

At the close of the seventeenth century and in the beginning of the eighteenth century, voices were raised everywhere among them, warning against the decay of morals engendered by the steadily increasing prosperity of the members of the brotherhood and by persistently growing laxness of doctrinal views. Tolerance indeed loomed up as the Nemesis of Anabaptism. If it be true that in the past they had been unreasonably strict in the administration of discipline, it now had become little more than a somber memory of bygone days; they now had scarcely any discipline at all.

The break between the Sunnists and the Lammists had been the inevitable result of a clash between a growing liberalism and a timid conservatism. And this last schism, for a time, had steadied the vessel of the *Doopsgezinden*.

<sup>2</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 142.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, 142.

But the Lammists, or liberal party, exercised the greater influence of the two on the course of future events. And yet, till that time, they had so maintained their ancient purity of life that, in 1772, one who had been chief of police in Amsterdam for half a century, could say that <sup>4</sup> "in all that time he had found not a single major accusation, on the criminal registers of the city, against a member of the brotherhood." Fair testimony indeed, in the largest and morally the lowest city in the commonwealth!

In the new century, they maintained their gradually acquired love of culture. Brons mentions, among the Mennonite celebrities of the eighteenth century, men like Hermannus Schyn, scholar and historian, whom I have repeatedly quoted; Maetschoen, a man of similar caliber; M. Schagen, famous in Holland by his translation of the works of Josephus into the vernacular; J. Deknatel, famous as a preacher and author both in Holland and Germany; and whole families, whose names live on till this day as the Loosjes, de Vries, ten Cate, Messchaert, Hoekstra, Hulshoff, van Hulst, Anslo, Van Gelder, Huidekooper, etc.<sup>5</sup>

During the whole of this century they maintained their position and strengthened it considerably. If they did not grow in numbers to any considerable extent; if they even lost members all the time to the State Church on account of the growing liberalism and fraternization and intermarriage, especially among the Lammists, they certainly grew in the popular esteem, they were honored by their fellow citizens, and the time was long past that a Mennonite was pointed at with scorn, as a sort of a gypsy, wandering among the churches of the Reformation.

<sup>4</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 151.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, 152.

But whatever changes inwardly occurred, in whatever their past differed from the present, amid all outward changes, they stedfastly maintained their ancient church polity. The local church remained autonomous. First among the Lammists and later among all the Dutch Mennonite churches, women received the same ecclesiastical status as men, that is to say, they received the full suffrage. But whatever changes were made, all along the main line they remained the true descendants of the fathers of the sixteenth century.

## 2. *Effects of Arminianism*

The Arminian controversy shook the Dutch Republic to its very foundations. The Church had here created the State; the Dutch war for liberty was essentially a religious war. It was caused by the intolerance and bigotry of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Spanish overlords of the country.

When the United Provinces broke the tie which bound them to Spain, the new government, though ostensibly declaring for liberty of conscience and religious freedom, made the Calvinistic Reformed Church the State Church.

Its symbol was found in the Belgic Confession of Guido de Bres, 1562, which was adopted in a secret (mostly Walloon) synod, at Antwerp, in 1566. But this symbol was not sufficiently definite and explicit on certain points of doctrine, notably the doctrine of the decrees and of the freedom of the human will.

We have seen, in a previous lecture, how Dirck Volkerts Coornhert was enamored of the principles and teachings of Sebastian Franck. No book was more frequently quoted by the early Arminians than Coornhert's "Art of Living Well" (*Wellevenskunst*).

All readers of Ypey and Dermout have sensed the sympathy of these authors with the Arminians. Small wonder therefore that they refuse to recognize Coornhert as one of the protagonists of the movement.<sup>6</sup>

Jacobus Arminius, 1609, was its father. Called upon, when pastor of the Reformed Church at Amsterdam, to refute Infra-lapsarianism and Coornhert's humanistic universalism, he was converted to both. Elected professor at Leyden in 1603, he found there a bitter opponent in Francis Gomarus. From the university the controversy spread all over the Church, and thus two bitterly antagonistic parties were created in the Establishment, a Calvinistic and an Arminian faction. The principles of the latter were laid down in the so-called "Remonstrance" of 1610, written by the followers of Arminius,<sup>7</sup> from which the party were called Remonstrants. The document postulated as follows: (1) God predestinates to life all those who believe in Christ. (2) The value of Christ's atonement is universal. (3) Human depravity is partial, not total. (4) The grace of God is resistible. (5) Believers may be finally lost.

The celebrated Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619, which settled the Arminian controversy, voiced Calvinism in its five points, which diametrically oppose the Remonstrant doctrine. These five points are as follows: (1) Election is wholly unconditional. (2) The value of the atonement is limited to the elect. (3) Human depravity is total. (4) Divine grace is irresistible. (5) All true saints persevere to the end.

A terrible controversy raged, which involved the whole Republic, in all its social ranks. The nation resolved itself into a general debating society. Politics soon were

<sup>6</sup> Y. en D., *Gesch. der Ned. Herv. Kerk*, II, Aant. 217.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, II, 191.

mixed up with it. Johann of Oldenbarneveldt, the able pensionary of Holland, as well as the States of that province, espoused the cause of the Remonstrants and stood for the political principle of decentralization. Prince Maurice of Nassau embraced the cause of the established Church, as he was bound to do by his oath, and his party stood for the political principle of centralization. It was the miniature prototype of our own civil war—the State or the Union, which? State rights or Federal rights? The country was brought to the verge of ruin, and had Spain not utterly lost its grip, it might have regained all it had lost, in this hour of disruption. Oldenbarneveldt's death by the sword, on a charge of high treason, May 19, 1619, is till this day a matter of debate, and the question is still asked, Was he a martyr or a traitor? Robbed of their great leader, the Arminians were overwhelmed; they were condemned by the Synod of Dordt, deposed from the ministry, if they were preachers, in which case they were also exiled, their churches were forbidden to open their doors for worship, and the whole Remonstrant faction was utterly overwhelmed.

But Arminianism was not to be rooted out in this way. It survived and was destined later on, in the ecclesiastical history of Holland, to lead to far more radical theological departures.

Was it possible for a party like that of the Mennonites, theologically wedded, as we have seen, to the doctrine of free will and to the denial of original sin, to be unmoved by the storm which swept everything about them, and which threatened to overthrow the Church that had so bitterly oppressed them?

Hundreds of their members had been converted to the State Church during the dark days of their persecution and bitter internal divisions; and later on again, in still



larger numbers they had joined the same Church during the days of their growing power and worldliness. And all these converts were potential Arminians, before the question of free will or sovereign grace was ever broached. And when the storm broke, it was hailed with undisguised delight by all the various branches of Dutch Anabaptism. The struggle could not hurt them; and it might infinitely benefit them. Naturally therefore the Mennonites stood on the side of the Remonstrant party. But there is still another angle from which the Arminian controversy was to touch the Mennonites; and that was the singular sect of the *Collegiants*, a sort of a by-product of the Arminian struggle.

Says Doctor Newman:<sup>8</sup>

Their modes of religious thought were distinctly anti-Calvinistic. Socinianism was undoubtedly the chief source of their impulse, though they did not dogmatize, as did the Socinians, on the person of Christ. . . It is highly probable that they were influenced to a considerable extent by the Mennonites, with many of whose views they thoroughly agreed, and who certainly took a prominent part in the movement, after its organization.

Let us see in how far Newman is correct. Who were these Collegiants? Is Socinianism an affluent of the current, or its main source, as Newman suggests?

As we have seen, the Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619, had deposed all pastors of the Remonstrant or Arminian party, exiling them and declaring their pulpits vacant.

This was also the case at Warmond and Oestgeest near Leyden, whose ministers were in exile. At a near-by village, Rhynsburg, a large part of the congregation sided with the Arminians; their preacher was a Calvinist, and they would not hear him. In each of these three vil-

<sup>8</sup> "Hist. of Antipedob.," 322.

lages lived a son of one Jacob van der Kodde. Of the father we have but very vague impressions; presumably he was a man of outstanding personality. One of the sons was professor at Leyden, the others were in the eldership of the Church, and all of them were Arminians. They resolved to hold meetings without a pastor, at which each man could speak, as the Spirit moved him. Gysbert was the first leader, his two brothers, Adrian and John, followed him at the succeeding meetings.

Meanwhile the Remonstrant brotherhood, with headquarters at Antwerp, sent out Hendrick van Holten to Warmond, to preach there, in defiance of the law. The Vander Koddess, once having tasted the sweets of leadership, refused to receive him or to recognize his mission. He went away, but the indefatigable committee at Antwerp sent out another man to Warmond, who was coolly informed by the Vander Koddess "that they needed no minister, but were full well able to edify themselves." The preacher however continued his ministrations to those who were willing to attend them. Thus a schism took place in the churches at Warmond, Oestgeest, and Rhynsburg; the loyal party united and formed a church, which was still in existence when Ypey and Dermout wrote their history, and may yet be. The others, followers of the Vander Kodde brothers, met at Rhynsburg and rejecting the regular ministry as an unbiblical institution, edified themselves by "prophesying." They were called Collegiants from their *collegia* or stated meetings for mutual Bible study, and Rhynsburgers from the place where they originally met. They considered all ministers, Calvinists and Arminians alike, as "servants of the dead letter." They were extremely self-centered; especially the Vander Kodde brothers strike a reader of Ypey and Dermout and of Rues, who has studied them more

minutely than any other man, as men in whom the ego preponderates.<sup>9</sup>

Rhynsburg became and remained the center of the new sect. There they began to celebrate communion without an ordained minister; there also, through Geesteranus, they adopted baptism by immersion from the Polish Socinians. As they recognized no ordained ministry, their baptism ever remained an irregular one. From Rhynsburg they branched out to other places, about 1646.

At one time they had *collegia* at Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leyden, Haarlem, Alkmaar, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Leeuwarden, and Groningen. They were strong in the first half of the eighteenth century, but began to dwindle in strength in the second half, and when Ypey and Dermout wrote their history, in 1822, they could say,<sup>10</sup> "Nowadays they cannot be found anywhere any more." They were therefore a Jonah's gourd, flourishing for a little while. Their doctrine was largely a derived faith. The greater part was pure Arminianism. They discarded all confessions of faith, a trained and ordained ministry, and infant baptism. All this they evidently borrowed from the Anabaptists. Immersion was borrowed from the Polish Socinians or Unitarians. With the Anabaptists they rejected the office of the magistrate, the use of the oath and of arms. Their only article of faith was belief in the Holy Scriptures, to be explained by each individual believer as he saw the light. Small wonder that numbers of men, tired of the endless dogmatic debates of the Arminian struggle, sought peace and refuge in this harbor of dogmatic indifference.

But their contact with the Mennonites left its mark

<sup>9</sup> Y. en D., *Gesch. der Herv. Kerk.*, II, 285 pp. Rues, Appendix, *Tegenw. Staet.*

<sup>10</sup> Idem, 289.

on the latter. They were less a special sect or congregation than a gathering of men who endeavored, without any binding formula of belief, to find the true light by debating on the meaning of the Scriptures from all conceivable points of view. For a time, in these dogmatic days, this must have been very refreshing. When the novelty wore off, the aggregation melted away. But in a way they presented splendid opportunities for young men who wanted to learn something about the Scriptures. Thus scores of Mennonite ministers and candidates for the ministry came to these meetings and were there influenced far more deeply than they knew. There Galenus de Haan of Amsterdam obtained his peculiar Socinian and liberalistic views. The Waterlandians, among the Dutch Mennonites, specially sought this contact, and thus the way was prepared for an ever-widening doctrinal schism between the Mennonites and the State Church of Holland; a condition of affairs which was finally destined to be reversed when the State Church had come over to their position in the growth of liberalism and ultimate modernism.<sup>11</sup>

But in the seventeenth century this contact and intimacy between the Mennonites, the Remonstrants, the Collegiants, and other groups considered heretical by the State Church, had the inevitable result of focusing once more the hatred of their enemies upon them.

Thus the Synod of 1651 prayed for the enforcement of all edicts against heretical sects and specifically begged <sup>12</sup> the States General "to prevent the building of Mennonite meeting-places [*Ermanungshäuser*, Brons calls them], and to command that those newly built be torn down again or at least closed, in order that the

<sup>11</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 134, 135.

<sup>12</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 137.

spread of their heresies may be hindered." And it was due only to the greater liberality of the politicians that the decree of the churchmen was not made the law of the State.

Vriesland was fairly aflame with opposition to the Mennonites. And there the government was more than willing to cooperate. The Frisian Stadholder, Henry Casimir II, issued a placard in 1687 in which he said:<sup>13</sup>

Since the devil, the sworn enemy of God, daily tries to sow new errors, for which he uses the Socinians, the Quakers, and the Dompelaars (dippers or Collegiants), who through their vain phantasies lead the people of God astray; and since we know that such people are in this province and are to be found among the Mennonites, in order that they may be able the more surely to sow their blasphemous seed among simple citizens, to the very great offense of many pious souls and to the denial of the Holy Trinity;

Therefore we renew the placards of 1662 and authorize all preachers to point out all suspects of these errors to the magistrates and to examine them in their presence, and whoever points out such an one shall receive a premium of twenty-five gold pieces (*Ryders*). We also forbid the printing and sale of their heretical writings and shameful songs.

The State Church preachers the sleuthhounds of heresy? A kind of Roma *rediviva*? Most assuredly. Make the cook mistress, and she will be harder on the coming cooks than ever her mistress was before her. That is human nature.

For the time being, especially in the North, the provision of the Union of Utrecht anent liberty of conscience seemed forgotten. But the Mennonites had themselves prepared the gallows, on which they were hung. They were ever their own greatest enemies.

The whole schism between the Waterlandians and the

<sup>13</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 137, 138.

others, between the Lammists and the Sunnists, was simply due to their eager contact with the Collegiants.

Mrs. Brons splendidly depicts the situation, when she says: <sup>14</sup>

A communion which neither had nor would have a binding symbol of faith, but which founded itself alone on the Holy Scriptures; a communion which without the least concern came in close contact with several reformed sects like the Quakers, the Collegiants, the Labadists, and the Moravians; which, in its liberty, did not hesitate to test the views of others and to acknowledge them as right, yea to adopt them as her own when she found them in accord with the Gospels, according to the word of the apostle, "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good," such a communion must be viewed with suspicion by the Reformed Church.

That was the inevitable; and the inevitable, as always, happened. The Church of the Netherlands had just passed through a struggle which had shaken it from center to circumference. The leaders were not unaware that the Arminians had found at least one of the great sources of their supply in the thousands of Mennonites who had joined the Church during the previous century and were continuing to join her, in the present century, men and women of exemplary lives, but doctrinally wholly foot-free, untrained, and with fundamental, hereditary ideas, wholly in line with the Remonstrant teachings. Does any one wonder that these strict churchmen of Holland were afraid of the Mennonites in the seventeenth century? And later events proved the essential oneness of the Mennonites in Holland with the Remonstrants. In all their later history they drew one line. Educationally they cooperated, and the theological views of the Arminian party were wholly absorbed by the *Doopsgezinden* or

<sup>14</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 155.



Mennonites. As time went on, they grew less distinctively Anabaptist in their views and more distinctly Arminian.

### 3. *Influence of Socinianism*

Between the Socinians and the Doopsgezinden or Mennonites there existed a still more obvious affinity than between them and the Arminians; for the simple reason that the Socinians expressed, although in different terms, the very same ideas which had been taught by their own great teachers in the sixteenth century. In fact, as has been pointed out before, the Socinians of the sixteenth century claimed Adam Pastor as the first man who had clearly voiced their doctrines in the Netherlands a century before.

Mosheim identifies the early Socinians in Poland with the Anabaptists and said that they were usually called by that name among the Poles,<sup>15</sup>

because they admitted none to baptism, in their assemblies, but adults and were accustomed to rebaptize such as came to them from other communions.

The preface of the Racovian catechism conveys the same idea. And this testimony is confirmed by the author of "The Epistle of the Life of Andreas Wissowitius," subjoined to Sand's *Bibliotheca*. He says that his sect bore the name of Arius and of the Anabaptists, but that the other Christians in Poland were all promiscuously called *Chrzescians* from *Chrzest*, which denotes baptism.<sup>16</sup> If this testimony stands, the distinction between the Anabaptists or *Wederdoopers* and the Baptists or *Doopsgezinden* was far more general and far more deep-seated than is generally supposed.

The Racovian catechism of 1574 clearly shows the af-

<sup>15</sup> "Inst. of Eccl. Hist.," III, 267.

<sup>16</sup> Idem, 225.

finity between the Anabaptists and the Socinians, when it forbids the taking of an oath and the repelling of assaults and injuries, and also in its doctrine of excommunication. Here they follow the original Mennonite line of procedure: first admonition; then expulsion; and if there be no betterment, after this, eternal damnation. In distinction from the Anabaptists they administered baptism by immersion—in *aquam immersio et emersio*.

As we have seen, immersion continued to be in vogue in Eastern Europe long after its abandonment in the West, on account of the propinquity of the Greek Church, which never abandoned it. And thus from Poland immersion came again to the Netherlands, through the channel of the Collegiant movement, and through them it came to that group of English Baptists which sent out Richard Blunt to obtain true baptism in the line of apostolic succession. Fortunately for the great Baptist denomination, the Richard Blunt claim has been long since abandoned by nearly all.

The Socinians attached little value to the sacraments; to them they were mere habits, good enough in a way, but of little real value. And so they attached no meaning to immersion, but simply retained it as a sacramental habit of the fathers.

It was different with the Baptist fathers in England, in 1641. With them immersion was a rediscovery, a great principle, the corner-stone of their whole ecclesiastical building. Between the Rhynsburgers or Collegiants and their baptism and that of the Baptists in England, in the middle of the seventeenth century, there is therefore not the slightest affinity.

The conditions described above prevailed during the leadership of Lælius Socinus, the uncle. Things changed when his nephew, Faustus Socinus, took over the reins.

Less erudite than his uncle, but far more practical and a better organizer, he was the true father of Socinianism. Absolute rationalism now began to pervade the movement. Faustus believed only what he could understand.

The leaven of Anabaptism, however, is discernible in the new Racovian catechism, as well as in the old. The new doctrinal standpoint still opposes resistance to evil, vengeance, arms-bearing, the oath, the infliction of capital punishment, luxurious living, etc.<sup>17</sup>

Faustus Socinus strangely reminds us, in all his teaching, of Adam Pastor. The appearance of the new doctrine was hailed with undisguised approval by the *Dooftsgezinden*. The Waterlandians, as always, are at the front again, the liberals among the Dutch Anabaptists, who more than any other faction among them have placed their cachet on all their later history.

Nay, I will go a step further. It is my deepest conviction that from 1664, the year of the last great schism in the ranks of the Mennonites, the history of the entire brotherhood in the Netherlands is really that of the Waterlandians. Galenus Abrahams de Haan occupies in their later history somewhat the same position which Menno Simons had held in their earlier development. Menno has become a mere name, a sort of enshrined saint among them, but few indeed are the *Dooftsgezinden* in Holland today who would travel far along the theological path blazed out by Menno. The great mass of them recognize in de Haan the man who marched on to broader fields and roomier ideas. He was the protagonist of the new spirit among them.

And one of the accusations against him, proved from his own celebrated nineteen articles, was that he had traveled more than a day's journey with the Socinians.

<sup>17</sup> "Inst. of Eccl. Hist.," III, 272.

For the next half century, the tendency toward Socinianism among the brotherhood grew apace, till in the eighteenth century the *Doopsgezinden* came once more to death-grapples with the Reformed Church, the last great struggle of their history in the Netherlands.

In the first two decades of the century it was like a smoldering fire, seeking for a vent-hole to enable it to break out into lurid flames. Everywhere rumors of tremendous Socinian propaganda were in the air, in which the *Doopsgezinden* especially figured.

The thing came to a crisis in the Synod of 1722, when a demand was made on the Mennonites to sign the following articles: <sup>18</sup>

1. That there are three divine persons in the divine essence, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that these three different persons are together the only eternal and true God.

2. That Christ is true and only God with the Father, possessed of all the divine attributes which belong to the divine essence, absolutely and from all eternity; (and that he is not God, made such by the Father.)

3. That the Holy Spirit is a true person, distinct from the Father, and shares equally with the Father and the Son in the same divine essence.

4. That Christ, being God from eternity, has become man in the fulness of time and, as our intercessor, has borne the punishment of our sins and thus has satisfied the divine justice, in order that we, by virtue of his merits, might be received in mercy by God.

The Synod seemed so sure of its position and of success that the Mennonites were stupefied with fear lest the government be behind the matter. And the power of the government was still absolute in religious matters in the eighteenth century. The theoretic constitutional prin-

<sup>18</sup> Rues, *Tegenw. Staet.*, 193.

ciple of liberty of conscience could easily be set aside, as it had been, to some extent, in the Arminian controversy, on the plea that the safety of the commonwealth was involved.

The Mennonite's conscience forbade him to sign, for by so doing he would sign away his historic faith. Deep gloom pervaded the entire brotherhood. Everywhere Mennonite pastors laid down their office, and their flocks were without shepherds. Through the united efforts of the entire body, in the different provinces, the ordinance was finally suspended. It was proved conclusively that their influence as citizens had grown by leaps and bounds, and that they were able, to some extent at least, to curb the power of the arrogant churchmen. The magistrates were, however, ordered to keep an eye on those pastors who had openly taught Socinian doctrines, but to leave the rest in peace. This was an evident subterfuge, since every one knew perfectly well that the Anabaptist doctrines, from the very beginning, had been in direct antagonism to the four points proposed by the Synod.<sup>19</sup>

Thus some years elapsed, when in 1738, the smoldering fire broke out anew in Vriesland; when Wybe Pieters, Pieke Tjommes, and Wytze Jeens, Mennonite pastors at Heerenveen, were accused by the Classis of Zevenwoude, of the State Church, of openly holding and preaching Socinian doctrines.

Called before the magistrates, the last two of these pastors refused to say what they believed of the four articles, which had figured in the matter years ago, and were at once deposed from their ministry. Thus Jeens and Tjommes were eliminated from the problem.

Pieters gained his case by indirection. He claimed that personally he could subscribe the articles, but that, by so

<sup>19</sup> Idem, 195; Y. en D., *Gesch. der Herv. Kerk*, III, Aant., 211.

doing, he would lose his pastorate. He would thus inflict on himself the same punishment which the magistrates had inflicted on his brethren. He claimed, therefore, inability openly to express his views about the four points. The high and mighty lords had apparently never viewed the matter from this unique standpoint, and they permitted him to continue his ministry.

The Church now appealed to the States of Vriesland to settle this matter, once for all, and a struggle ensued, which ultimately involved the whole country and all the universities of the country.

This struggle created a literature, which is voluminous in itself.

In 1740, the *Dooptgezinden* presented a so-called "Deduction," entitled "The right of religious liberty, religion, and conscience, set forth in a request, with added deductions, in the name of the *Dooptgezinden* in Vriesland, delivered to the Noble, Puissant Lords, States of the aforesaid province, met in Diet at Leeuwarden, 1740." In this document they claimed that their constitutional rights, under the laws of the land, were infringed.

The worm had turned at last, and the storm broke out afresh, while the wind blew from every quarter.

Writings for and against the *Dooptgezinden* and their complaint appeared in swift succession, till they formed a fair-sized library by themselves. Prof. Daniel Gerdes of Groningen and Prof. Antony Driessen of the same university; Prof. Jan van den Honert of Leyden; Prof. Hermanus Vennema of Franeker—all of these took part in the literary controversy, which involved all the theological faculties in the land, viz., those of Groningen, Franeker, Harderwyk, Utrecht, and Leyden. The entire State Church was in commotion from North to South and from East to West.



The storm-center was a book containing five sermons, published by a young Mennonite preacher at Harlingen, John Simons Stinstra. It bore the title "Nature and Condition of the Kingdom of Christ; its Subjects, Church, and Religion, sketched in five sermons."<sup>20</sup> It was issued at Harlingen in 1741. The treatment of this book and incidentally of the whole question, by Professor Vennema of Franeker, did much to clear the atmosphere. He clearly proved that the accusations of the opponents could not be proved from the contents of this book, and closed his discussion of the subject with a quotation from the celebrated Witsius, *In necessariis unitas, in non necessariis libertas, in omnibus prudentia et caritas*.

On January 13, 1742, the deputies of the States of Vriesland nevertheless deposed Stinstra from the ministry and forbade the further publication and sale of the book. Stinstra replied with an immediate appeal to the full States, when they met, the same year, in their usual great session.

At this meeting a committee of Mennonites also appeared to pray for the maintenance of their ancient liberties and for the reinstatement of Stinstra. Both papers were coolly laid on the table.<sup>21</sup> Vriesland was still the main stronghold of opposition to the brotherhood.

The matter was never fully settled; the middle of the century still saw it drag its weary length along.

Stinstra could not preach, but he could write, and he wrote and published one sermon a month; and these sermons did more to abate the trouble than all the learned discussions of the past. By 1757 the bitter antagonism had sufficiently abated to enable Stinstra to resume his pastorate at Harlingen unhindered, and there he remained

<sup>20</sup> Rues, *Tegenw. Staet.*, 212.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, 243.

till his death in 1800. And this hounded preacher of 1742 was asked by the same body which had deposed him to come to Leeuwarden, in 1757, to preach for the mellowed fathers every Sunday, as long as the States were in session, and that—wonder of wonders—in the Mennonite church.<sup>22</sup> Strange conversion!

When toward the close of the century the embittered Reformed ministers tried once more to rejuvenate the dead spirit of persecution and renewed the four old articles, to which seven new ones of similar import were added, they found the government unwilling to lift a hand. Religious liberty by this time had become more than a dead letter, and the churchmen knew full well that without the government no persecution was possible.

The spirit of intolerance was dead and was to be revived only once more when, in 1834, the believers in the old orthodox faith in the State Church, tired of the liberalism which had overwhelmed the whole Church of the fathers, and hungering for the gospel, which the Church no longer offered them, separated from her to establish the Free Church or Christian Reformed Church of the Netherlands.

As the close of the century drew near, and the sense of approaching catastrophe and universal cataclysm in every conceivable direction gripped the souls of men, there was little time to think of dogmatic niceties or of persecutions. The foundations of Church and State alike were rocking, and all faith apparently was in a state of flux.

The Mennonites, like all the other Churches, great and small, in Holland as elsewhere in Europe, were carried down the swift current which disembogued in the great revolution.

<sup>22</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 162.

#### 4. *Growing Importance of the Mennonites*

The storm of the eighteenth century had passed away and had become a memory. It left the Mennonites practically where they had been before. There had always been a bitter jealousy between the Church and the State in Holland. The politicians resented the attitude of the churchmen, whose dream of superiority seemed to have been realized in the days of the Arminian controversy through the strong support of Prince Maurice of Nassau. The disturbed equilibrium had been restored again, but after all, a bitter taste was left in the mouths of the men who were the pilots of the vessel of State. Its life had been a strenuous one almost from the beginning, for the Dutch Republic never was very popular with its neighbors, and danger threatened now from England, then from France.

And the State needed money and a great deal of it and, strange to say, the *Dooptgezinden* had it. Long since they had ceased to believe that no member of the brotherhood could accept an office under the government; and both in Vriesland and in the other provinces the government had begun to pick out Mennonites for positions of great trust.<sup>23</sup>

The antagonism of the church party was broken on this rock of official approval, and the persecution of the *Dooptgezinden* had competely terminated. Moreover, the prevailing spirit of the closing years of the eighteenth century, with its ever-growing liberalism, interdicted all indications of religious intolerance.

Finally, by the change of the constitution, in 1795, the State Church was abolished, and all Christian confessions or beliefs were given equal rights under the law. Mem-

<sup>23</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 162.

bership in the State Church was no longer needed for the fullest exercise of the rights of citizenship. The Mennonites were no longer compelled to feel the yoke of mere toleration; they stood on the same line with other men. They had always stood for absolute religious liberty, always for absolute separation between Church and State. Their martyrs had died for these principles, their teachers had ceaselessly inculcated them. Is Mrs. Brons far wrong when she says,<sup>24</sup> "They dared to assert that, with the help of the gospel, they had always been the pioneers of religious liberty"? It is undeniable that the *Doopsgesinden* occupied a position of growing importance, in the Republic, at the close of the eighteenth century. They were still wholly loyal to the existing government, and as yet, as a body, as averse as ever to the revolutionary methods of the Münster fanatics.

But bitter days now lay before the Republic. The ship, which for three centuries had weathered every gale and steered clear of all dangerous coasts, was now approaching the breakers. The cruel days of the revolution and of complete God-forgetfulness and of unutterable humiliation lay before her. And if the testimony we have previously cited be true, that no criminal was found among them in fifty years, during the entire tenure of office of the chief of police in the city of Amsterdam in the eighteenth century, we may rest assured that the quiet strength and the loyalty of the mass of the Mennonites were one of the best assets to the Netherlands in the momentous changes through which the country was about to pass.

I have no records nor statistics at hand by which to prove my contention; but I am morally sure that among the strongest and most ardent supporters of the counter-revolution, which brought the house of Orange back

<sup>24</sup> Idem, 164.

from its English exile to Holland, were the great mass of these quiet, undogmatic, practically pious, and utterly reliable *Doopsgezinden*.

William of Orange had befriended them, in the hour of their greatest need, and the Mennonites ever were possessed of a tenacious memory.

### 5. Benevolence of the Mennonites

As a people the Mennonites never were fond of ostentatious living. We have cited exceptions to this rule, as we have studied the development of the Anabaptist movement from its very beginning in the Lowlands. But the rule of their lives was one of humility and thrift and altruism. As a matter of course this altruism showed itself first of all at home and among the brotherhood; but as their views expanded, their benevolence by degrees began to include the fatherland and suffering humanity everywhere.

This altruistic spirit led them, in the opening years of the eighteenth century, to establish the Fund for Foreign Needs (*Fonds voor Buitenlandsche Nooden*). All the parties among the followers of Menno had contributed to this fund; and from it aid was given to the persecuted brethren in France and in the Palatinate in the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

When the American Mennonites at Germantown, in this period, needed a preacher, the Holland brethren did their utmost to find them one. But America was then far, far away, the wide sea had its sore terrors, and consequently they failed of their purpose of finding a man. But at the advice of the Holland brethren, the American Mennonites elected from among themselves William Rittinghausen as their pastor and kept him as such till he

<sup>25</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 204, 205, 209, 214, 219, 251, 252.

died in 1708. When they needed books and Bibles, these were sent to them from Holland.

In 1717, the Fund paid out four thousand guilders for the assistance of Mennonite exiles who had come to Holland as a harbor of refuge. Again, in 1734, they paid a ransom to the elector of the Palatinate, as a guaranty of religious liberty for the persecuted Mennonites.

Brons fills page after page with recitals of the wonderful benevolence shown in the creation of the Fund, and from which aid was freely given wherever it was needed by the brotherhood. It has been well said,<sup>26</sup> "The benevolence of the Dutch brotherhood for their fellow believers remains a crown of glory in their history, which can never fade."

## 6. *The Growing Love for Scholarship*

Originally both the Anabaptists and the Mennonites were averse to scholastic and scientific pursuits. They looked askance at human learning. Their general attitude had been voiced by Derck Philips, one of their brightest stars and most logical thinkers. Even he looked with suspicion on the product of the schools; and as we have seen, in their earlier days they absolutely preferred a God-made rather than a man-made ministry.

This attitude reminds us of one of the biting "Laymen's Stanzas," *Leeken Dichtjes*, of the bitter-sweet Dutch poet, De Genestet, who says:

*Hy was een God-geleerde,  
Zy was geleerd van God.  
(He was a theologian,  
She had been taught of God.)*

<sup>26</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 217.



That was their ideal—to be taught of God, to be learners in the one great school, the school of the Book. Thus they had come to idolize the Scriptures, to study them exclusively and subjectively, and to disparage all human learning in every direction. But in the course of time the more intelligent among them had come to see that this narrow limitation of their intellectual horizon spelled disaster for the entire brotherhood. Thus in the eighteenth century a hunger for intellectual pursuits began to reveal itself among their younger men. They began to sense the need of expansion, of wider and deeper knowledge among their preachers and, as we have seen, they sought it in the debating clubs of the Collegiants and among the Remonstrants, for both of whom they felt a natural affinity. This spirit was especially strong among the Waterlandians, and from this group the aspirations went forth which were destined to change the entire outlook of the Mennonites in the Netherlands. For their intimate contact with the Remonstrants and Collegiants and Socinians led them into a channel, where the drift was always more irresistibly away from their former undogmatic to a subsequent antidogmatic position, and thus Modernism, when it appeared, reaped a rich harvest among them.

It has been shown how, in the eighteenth century, they could boast of names among the brotherhood, of national and even international reputation. In this connection I want to point to certain landmarks of intellectualism, which I had originally intended to treat later, but for which the logical place seems to be right here. I have reference to the institutions, which they have founded.

And first of all I point to their seminary at Amsterdam. The Waterlandians early felt the need of a trained ministry; as it was felt that the old method of electing

men to be spiritual leaders, without any special preparation for the office, was wholly out of joint with the times. Galenus de Haan therefore tentatively began the preparation of men for the ministry, in the seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup> Rues supplies added information, when he tells us that the Church of the Lammists, in Amsterdam, in his day, supported a salaried teacher of theology.<sup>28</sup>

As the power of the Church in ecclesiastical affairs slowly died out, and that of its natural enemies, the politicians, grew by degrees, greater leniency was shown to the Mennonites. The chief cities set the example, as early as 1627.<sup>29</sup>

This leniency included the Remonstrant party, which obtained liberty at Amsterdam, in 1630, to have their own church and to conduct their own services therein. Thus encouraged they founded, three years later, their own celebrated seminary in the chief city of the Netherlands, of which Episcopius, who after the death of Arminius, had become the leader of the party, became the first professor in theology. He died in that position, in 1643.<sup>30</sup> Limborch and Clericus (le Clercq) taught in the same school. The Mennonite young men eagerly sought their training there, but in the dire need of pastors even many Remonstrants were called to Mennonite pulpits. Thus the bond between them became ever closer. In 1724, however, the Remonstrants themselves, through the insistent demand for a competently trained ministry, were compelled to dissuade their ministers from serving Mennonite churches, and they were also forced to close their school for Mennonite students.

Thus the *Doopsgezinden* were placed before a serious dilemma. The Lammists of Amsterdam now undertook

<sup>27</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 148.

<sup>28</sup> *Tegenw. Staet.*

<sup>29</sup> Ypey en Dermout, II, 329.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*, 330.

to establish a school for themselves and, in 1735, Tjerk Nieuwenhuis was appointed as its first professor in theology and philosophy. The churches, however, showed very little sympathy with the undertaking, which was indicated by the fact that, at a meeting to discuss the subject, of the forty-two churches invited to send delegates only six responded. The church "Under the Lamb," the mother church of the Lammists, therefore shouldered the burden alone.<sup>31</sup> The board of directors of this nascent seminary consisted of the professor in charge, four ministers, two deacons, and three laymen. The first endowments paid in, were furnished by two members of the same old church, Jan Honoré and Leonard Thomas de Vogel.<sup>32</sup> In these two schools lay the nucleus for the subsequent City University (*Stedelyke Universiteit*) of Amsterdam. At the present time young Doopsgezinden studying for the ministry spend five years at one of the national universities, the last two at Amsterdam, during which the candidate for the ministry is compelled to attend the lectures in the Mennonite Seminary. The professors in this school are at the same time regular professors in the theological faculty of the City University.<sup>33</sup> The late Dr. S. Cramer, one of the two editors of the *Bibliotheca*, celebrated as a historian and, as I know to my joy, an ever-ready adviser and helper of the man eager for original research work, was one of these professors at the time of his death, January 30, 1913. I reverently place a garland of immortelles on his grave.

Another institution, which has made the Dutch Mennonites famous, is the Teyler Institution, or correctly, "The Society for the Extension of Knowledge and for the Establishment of the Christian Religion," 1778. The

<sup>31</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 149.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, 149.

<sup>33</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 358.

danger which threatened the Mennonites was not specially materialistic in its nature, but it lay in the subtle changes which were taking place in their deepest religious convictions. And to remedy this condition of affairs, Pieter Teyler vander Hulst, at the close of the eighteenth century, established the above society, which bore his name. The original family name was not Teyler but Taylor. Its founder had fled from England to Holland, in 1580, and had married a young Dutch woman, Tryntje Kerkhoven, who was also a religious refugee from Flanders. The family became wealthy. When Teyler died, he left a considerable capital for the founding of the institution, besides a museum for natural history, coins, paintings, rare books, etc. This foundation was further enriched by the Stolpian legacy, and has exerted a telling influence on the development of religious and scientific thought in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. It offers premiums in money, or gold and silver medals, for the best answers to questions of the utmost variety, of a religious and scientific character. Not only Mennonite scholars, but men of every conceivable religious type, in Holland, France, and Germany, compete for the honors it offers.<sup>34</sup>

But the scholarly zest of the Mennonites had not been exhausted by this first serious undertaking of theirs in a new direction. Six years after the founding of the Teyler Institute, in 1784, Jan Nieuwenhuizen, with his son, who was a doctor of medicine at Amsterdam, and two other men, A. J. Hoekstra and A. H. van Gelder, founded the Society for the Public Good (*De Maatschappij tot nut van het Algemeen*), whose aim was the improvement of general conditions. Mrs. Brons calls it<sup>35</sup> "one of the most flourishing and noteworthy associa-

<sup>34</sup> Idem, 153.

<sup>35</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 165.

tions of its kind in Europe." It aimed and still aims at the uplift of the masses; it created the Dutch public-school system, savings-banks, public libraries, kindergartens, etc. It tabooes politics and religion, and practically all educated Dutchmen today are members of 't Nut. Both men and women are welcome to its membership.

The old mother church at Amsterdam had practically all alone sustained the burden of the Training School for the ministry, till France overwhelmed the Dutch Republic. But the heavy draft on her income through the demands of the rapacious State, since 1795, threatened its very existence. The churches of Haarlem and Zaandam were the first to declare their willingness to cooperate in the work. A new enthusiasm was thus created which spread far and wide and, in 1811, it was decided to sustain the institution on a broader scale. And thus, for the first time in the history of Dutch Anabaptism, the plan ripened to provide all churches of the brotherhood with specially trained men, and also to create a sustentation fund for the assistance of weak congregations. This was the beginning of the "United Mennonite Society" (*de Algemeene Doopsgezinde Sociteit*) which was destined to play an important part in their subsequent history.<sup>36</sup>

All these institutions demand leadership of a high order of intelligence, and the supply seems always to meet the demand, which indicates that the day is forever past, in the history of the Dutch Mennonites, in which intellectual pursuits were looked upon as belonging to the realm of "the world." Once they began to feel proud of their history and developed an interest in historical studies along the channels of their own past, it was found that they could boast of historians who were fully abreast of their contemporaries in this department.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, 165.

They found an outlet for the product of these historical studies in the "Mennonite Contributions" (*Doopsgezinde Bydragen*), in which articles of a very high order appeared. Most of the names of these historians have been freely quoted in these lectures—S. Müller, A. M. Cramer, S. Blaupot ten Cate, J. G. de Hoop Scheffer, Chr. Sepp, and especially the lamented Dr. S. Cramer.

### 7. *The French Revolution*

We are living in days of high tension, in which a spirit of anarchy passes from country to country, and in which thrones and principalities have tottered and fallen, till of the old forms of government in Europe but little remains. And what we are experiencing is but the echo (or is it the final development?) of the spirit of revolution which shook France, aye, and all Europe to its deepest foundations in the closing years of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution was underlaid by a type of infidelity totally different from anything which had hitherto appeared; the most callous and radical type of rationalism which had ever been developed in the history of the Church.

Its organ was found in the *Encyclopedie Française*, edited by Diderot and D'Alembert, and whose contributors were men like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Helvetius, Holbach, and Rousseau. Never perhaps in the history of the world was a more brilliant group of men cooperating for an object, to them in the main only a scholastic idea, but fraught with the gravest issues for humanity.

The hearts of men were inflamed, evil passions were aroused to frenzy; the down-trodden masses, held under a cruel yoke of age-long oppression, broke their bonds and, with the cry *Ni Dieu ni maître* flung themselves at the throats of their masters and inaugurated the hectic



revolt which disemboweled France, wiped out her line of kings, crushed the Church under its heel, and changed all of France, but especially Paris, into a shambles. It reached its climax in the Terrorist National Convention, 1792-1795, which abolished "The Christian Era," on October 5, 1793, aye, and "Christianity" itself, on November 7 of the same year. It must have appeared to all men of sober mind, in that era, as if the end of the world had come.

Like wild-fire the revolution spread in every direction, and Holland saw its Republic, founded in martyr blood and the prayers of the saints, swirled away to destruction in the turbulent flood. Suddenly the whole country teemed with riot and turmoil. These so-called "phlegmatic" Dutchmen were changed into hysterical maniacs, and a strange restlessness, a bizarre lust for change and liberty, of which no nation at that day had a greater share than they, welled up in every breast. Everywhere men and women danced about liberty poles set up on the commons, and shouted the slogan of the French revolution, *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

The churches in Holland, as elsewhere, were tried to the core. It appears to me that Hase was correct, when he said,<sup>37</sup> "The revolution was not occasioned by the collapse of the Church, but was made possible by it." Such was certainly the case in the Netherlands. The old faith had gone, and a dead supranaturalism had begun to take its place.

The Mennonite churches, as well as the others, were caught in this swift current, even more so than any other group of believers in the country.<sup>38</sup> Complete liberty meant at least complete separation between Church and

<sup>37</sup> "History of the Church," 434.

<sup>38</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 163.

State. How deeply the new spirit gripped them may be judged from the fact that some of them whose hereditary principles demanded passive obedience and whose fathers had passionately condemned war and the bearing of arms, now not only encouraged the revolution but were among the most zealous supporters of and participants in the forming of armed citizens' militia, which aimed at the overthrow of the existing government.<sup>39</sup> These cases were, however, exceptional, and they were condemned by the rank and file of the Mennonites; and it is a significant fact that this spirit displayed itself among the brotherhood mainly in Vriesland where they had been so long and so bitterly persecuted. The Mennonites as a whole were as bitterly opposed to the revolution as any other sect or church in the land.

But all action causes reaction. The French Revolution reacted in the French empire, and the Napoleonic régime began. The Dutch Republic was abolished and Napoleon annexed Holland to his great empire. The supreme trial of Europe had begun.

How the Churches suffered under the hand of the conqueror!

A glance at the "Inventory of the Archives in the hands of the United Mennonite Church at Amsterdam" (*Inventaris der Archiefstukken berustende by de Vereenigde Doopsgesinde gemeente te Amsterdam*), edited by De Hoop Scheffer, 1883-1884, will tell us of the endless vexations and troubles of the brotherhood at that time.

Napoleon demanded organization. He was the man of the square and the compass, the high priest of exactitude in outward form and accessibility of facts. And the Mennonites always had been, were then, and still

<sup>39</sup> Y. en D., *Gesch. der Herv. Kerk*, III, 420.

are a body consisting of perfectly independent units. They were then, as they still are, divided into groups. Fortunately Napoleon had approved the appointment of a Hollander at the head of the commission, to whom the reorganization of all the churches in Holland was entrusted.<sup>40</sup>

Baron d'Alphonse, as general intendant of domestic affairs, had control of the whole matter; but the Reformed, the Lutherans, the Remonstrants, and the Mennonites owed a great deal to the shrewd management of their affairs by Janssen. The Mennonites were in a peculiarly bad way. Napoleon insisted on organizing the Mennonites as a whole, under the imperial decree; and they could not be thus organized, by virtue of their internal constitution. Janssen therefore prevailed on d'Alphonse to accept an apparent organization in lieu of a real one.<sup>41</sup> This was accomplished by articles, which in the main were as follows: <sup>42</sup>

1. The communion of the *Doopsgezinden*, separated into its constituent groups, shall continue as heretofore.

2. The minister of religion shall correspond only with such consistories, as are appointed as "corresponding consistories."

3. Said consistories shall be the medium of correspondence for all congregations in their district.

4. These consistories will not assume governing authority over the congregations under them, which will all retain their absolute autonomy.

5. A vacancy in any pulpit shall be at once reported to the "corresponding consistories," and the vacancy shall not be filled except with the approval of his Majesty, the Emperor.

Thus the *Doopsgezinden* lived on during the years of the French régime; and when, by the counter-revolution

<sup>40</sup> Idem, IV, 390.

<sup>41</sup> Y. en D., *Gesch. der Herv. Kerk.* IV, 526.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, IV, 527.

of 1813, William of Orange returned, and Holland again became an independent State, a kingdom this time, they had suffered perhaps less than any other religious body from the interference of the French government.

In the opening years of the nineteenth century, they still faced the future undaunted, although their churches, notably in the larger cities, had suffered considerably in a financial way, through the confiscatory methods of the French.

### 8. *Influence of Modernism*

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the theology of the Dutch Reformed Church had wholly lost the vigor and depth of its earlier days. A flat and insipid supernaturalism had replaced it, represented by men like Van der Palm, Borger, Clarisse, Kist, Van Hengel, all at the University of Leyden; Chevallier, Muntinghe, and Ypey, at Groningen; Heringa, Royaards, Bouman, and Vinke, at Utrecht; and by numerous celebrated ministers throughout the Church. This whole tendency stood for a modified rationalism. It professed to build on the Scriptures, but was anticonfessional, antiphilosophical, and anti-Calvinistic. It was deistical in its dogmatics, Pelagian in its anthropology, moralistic in its Christology, collegialistic in its ecclesiology, and eudaimonistic in its eschatology.<sup>43</sup>

About 1835 it was set aside by the Groninger theology, especially in the Northern part of the country, which replaced revelation and doctrine by the idea of "training for a higher destiny," whose ultimate aim was conformity with God; a theological evolutionary hypothesis, therefore.

But by the middle of the century all this was swept

<sup>43</sup> Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.*, I, 129.

away by Modernism. Its foundations were laid by Professor Opzoomer of Utrecht. Its protagonists were Scholten, who prepared its way theologically, with his "Doctrine of the Reformed Church" (*Leer der Hervormde Kerk*), and Kuenen, who with Wellhausen of Germany became the founder of the destructive critical school, especially as regards the early books of the Testament.

Thus modernism was born, which for a time swept everything before it. The old dogmatics were entirely discarded and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith—the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the atonement, miracles, the resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ, heaven and hell—all these were ruthlessly cast aside.

They were replaced by an outwardly sweet and attractive humanitarianism, in which doctrine had no part whatever, but in which life counted for everything. It was the culmination, in the Netherlands, of a series of negative doctrinal steps, by which the center of gravity by degrees was wholly removed from God to man, from the world to come to the world that now is.

Now remember our outline of the theology of the Dutch Anabaptists, their views on the Trinity, on the divinity of Christ, on the atonement, on original sin, on doctrine as compared to life; and tell me, was it not inevitable that this new theological or rather untheological departure should take them by storm and win among them large numbers of eager recruits?

Both the Remonstrants and the Mennonites were quickly largely won over to the side of the Modernists.

Perhaps the most striking example of the general attitude of serious-minded Mennonites today is found in the wonderful story of the Anabaptists from the hand

of Mrs. Brons, which I have repeatedly quoted. The attitude of this talented writer is frankly and thoroughly modern. Says she: <sup>44</sup>

It is a general phenomenon of modern times that religion no longer forms the center of human interest in the same way as in former centuries. The questions which then dominated all were those of its outward exhibition in worship, ceremonies, and doctrinal statements. For, by degrees, religion had become identified with these external forms; and its ethical contents, which Christ put in the forefront, with a breaking of similar stark forms, were assigned a secondary position, wholly in contradiction with the fundamental ideas of its founder. The reaction did not fail to come. The horror of the bondage of dogmas had led large numbers, who in the end confounded the husk with the kernel, to the point of extending their aversion of the mere outward in religion to the whole of it and to supinely withdraw from it with indifference and disdain.

And again: <sup>45</sup>

In every field of science we behold a fresh and joyful progress but, with regard to our appreciation of the Bible, only here and there the German people begin to overcome their fear of the light. As a whole they occupy a standpoint, almost the same as that which they held three hundred years ago. The majority of the Protestants are still bound by the antiquated confessions of that period. But the Mennonites, by reason of the perfect liberty which the fathers obtained and kept for them, are not hindered by anything to prove everything and to hold fast to that which is good. Such a test the Bible must be able to stand, in what is spiritual in it, or it is not what man has hitherto believed it to be. The real in the Bible will stand forth in all the greater brilliancy, the more the unreal in it is recognized and treated as such. The real, the spirit which fills it, that is love, and tenderness of conscience is valuable for all men. On the unreal, the differences in the confessions and in churchdom are built up, etc.

<sup>44</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 378.

<sup>45</sup> *Idem.* 380.



Here we have a clear statement of the doctrinal position held, at this day, by the overwhelming majority of Dutch Mennonites. Thus they view life and faith.

### *9. Final Union-Efforts, and Present Condition of the Mennonites*

It is passing strange that such a measure of organic oneness as is theirs today was obtained by the Dutch Mennonites by means of that very trained ministry which they despised and rejected in their earlier history. As we have indicated repeatedly, the party among them, which more than any other has blazed the way to their present position of importance and recognition, is that of the Waterlandians. They were the first to broaden out, they first began to break through the wall of separation and seclusion which kept them apart from all fellow believers. They first of all began to lay the foundations for an educated ministry, and when Amsterdam, in the bitter days of the French régime, felt her strength waning, and when the danger presented itself of a compulsory closing of the doors of their school in the capital city, suddenly a wave of concentrated effort passed over all the churches and the founding of the General Mennonite Society, in 1811, may be considered as the occasion by which a sense of solidarity was born among them.

Of course, after a fashion, the Frisian and Groninger societies had reached out toward the same end. But after all, they were local and provincial in character. With their ever-broadening views in theology and their great humanitarian interests, it was inevitable that the ingrained and inherited sense of differentiation and distrust which so long had obtained among them, must finally make place for more advanced and more thoroughly fraternal views. The Groninger Society maintains a spe-

cial fund for the support of ministers' widows, since 1835; they also take care of their orphans.

The brotherhood as a whole have organized a special "Society for the Mennonites of the Dispersion," which does excellent work for little bands of their fellow believers scattered here and there.

Since 1849, they also have a Foreign Missionary Society, laboring not only in heathen, but in all foreign lands, wherever an opportunity offers itself. Churches were founded by this Society on Java and Sumatra. And in these foreign missionary efforts, they were among the first to start a medical mission and an agricultural colony.

They edit their own paper, "The Sunday Herald," (*De Zondagsbode*), which is read by practically all the Dutch Mennonites.

In their internal constitution, they are still absolutely autonomous. Each church is a perfect unit in itself. Religious instruction is regularly given to their children, from the age of ten till they are ready for baptism. Baptism still occurs generally late in youth, most of them considering eighteen as too early in life for so serious an undertaking.

Liberalism, as has been shown, is in vogue among them, although <sup>46</sup> "an evangelical minority still represents a sort of Biblical orthodoxy, but free from all polemic." The old opposition to the bearing of arms and military service has been wholly abandoned; the oath is still forbidden to Dutch Mennonites. One of their members was nominated some years ago as minister of war, indicating how absolute has been their change of base in regard to pacifism. Since 1809, their preachers, if they desire it, receive a subsidy from the State treasury, as do the ministers of the Reformed Church.

<sup>46</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 361.

A remarkable number of noted statesmen, ministers, representatives in the Lower and Higher House, burgo-masters of different cities, etc., have belonged and are still belonging to the Mennonites.

Numerically they are weak, far out of proportion to the recognition they have received, which pleads well for their intrinsic value as citizens. In 1808, they numbered only 26,935 souls in all. In 1860, the number had risen to 41,813 souls. In 1900, they numbered 57,786 souls. At the present time they have about three thousand more souls, so that they number about sixty thousand in all. If we remember that this includes not members only, but all their unbaptized children as well, their insignificance numerically is at once apparent.

The old affection for the Mennonite brotherhood, and the mutual tolerance which springs from the recognition of the exalted and highly honored demand for freedom of personal conviction, all this has caused a deeply felt and undisturbed internal unity, which encompasses all the Dutch *Doopsgezinden*.<sup>47</sup>

What will their future be? Who can tell us?

#### 10. *Influence of the Mennonites on Ecclesiastical Developments, especially in England*

Vedder has called the Anabaptist movement "the radical Reformation." In view of all we have seen about this movement, is there much doubt in regard to the correctness of his statement? I do not now speak of that peculiar tendency within the circle of the Anabaptist movement, which we have called "radical," radical in their theology, radical in their views of life. But broadly speaking, does not the entire movement stand for and

<sup>47</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 361.

make for radicalism? We have studied the theological views of the men whom we dubbed "conservatives," as compared with men like Pastor and Niklaes and Franck and Matthysz. But did not the opinions of Menno and Derck Philips and the other leaders of the conservative wing of the movement, in the end, make for Arminianism and Socinianism? Or at least, did they not prepare the way for the acceptance of these views, once they had appeared on the scene?

And is not the entire ultimate position they occupied in the Netherlands, where of all lands they made the deepest impression in the end, and where they attained the greatest success, a substantial verification of the words of Doctor Vedder, when we place them side by side with the candid avowal of Mrs. Brons?<sup>48</sup>

And let us remember, on the part of the Anabaptists this was not a gradual dogmatic change, a sort of doctrinal evolution, as it has been in many other communions, springing from the Reformation; but with them it was the maintenance of an essential principle as old as their communion—the absolute and untrammelled freedom of every individual to read in the Scriptures the things he saw, or thought he saw there, without any confessional restraint or ecclesiastical control. Modernism, which in these later days has so completely enveloped the Mennonite churches of the Netherlands, lay hidden in these early Anabaptist principles as the oak lies hidden in the acorn. Small wonder then that these sons and daughters of untrammelled freedom have exerted a generative influence far beyond their own country.

And as they were connected with no country so closely as with England, there was no country where this influence was so strongly felt as there. Professor Lezius

<sup>48</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 361.

of Greifswald is quoted by the "Mennonite Papers" (*Mennonitische Bladen*) as follows:<sup>49</sup>

When the seventeenth century in England has led to a great victory for the idea of tolerance as soon as it began to be discussed and was called into existence, this merit is to be only ascribed to the *Dooptgezinden*, the Independents, and Quakers, who demanded from the state liberty to build their own churches.

And where did all this love of independence and of liberty originate? Is Mrs. Brons correct or not, when she speaks,<sup>50</sup> in this connection, of the

Independents and Quakers and Baptists, who with their fathers, the Mennonites, belong to the originators of that great movement of the spirits of men, of which the ideal was the liberation and elevation of man in every sphere, and which with all the great results which it has already attained, is as yet far from having reached the goal—that is to say, Liberalism.

So much is sure, on no country outside of Holland did they exercise a more obvious and indisputable influence than on England.

The distance between Holland and England is small, and in the turbulent times of the great persecution, in the Lowlands, refugees by the thousands left Holland for the harbor of refuge in the great island kingdom. As early as 1546 several refugees, mostly from Antwerp, came to London, where Catherine Parr, the wife of Henry VIII, made the Reformed party welcome. In this same year the church of the Augustinian convent was handed over to them by Cranmer, and it soon had four regular pastors, under the superintendency of John à Lasco. In 1553 it counted nearly four thousand members.<sup>51</sup> So large had been the immigration from the

<sup>49</sup> November, 1909.

<sup>51</sup> Y. en D., *Gesch. der Herv. Kerk* I, 156.

<sup>50</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 357.

Netherlands that in 1550 they literally came by shiploads.<sup>52</sup>

By far the majority of these immigrants were Anabaptists, because in this period they far outnumbered the Reformed in Holland. If the latter came by hundreds, the others came by thousands. But at this time they were still everywhere identified with the Münster fanatics, and they were compelled to hide their identity. In England, as well as on the Continent, they were proscribed as public enemies. So long, however, as they lay hidden they were not ferreted out. During the six years of the reign of Edward VI England had absolute religious liberty, with the exception of the sect of the Anabaptists who were under the ban. And how closely the Anabaptists hid their identity in all these years may be judged from the fact that in the whole reign of Edward VI "no one was heard to suffer for any matter of religion, either Papist or Protestant, two only excepted: an Englishwoman, Joan Boucher of Kent, and a Dutchman named George."<sup>53</sup> Both were Anabaptists and unquestionably of the violent type, if not politically, at least doctrinally.

For not all lay hidden; there were always exuberant spirits among them, who did not believe in hiding the light under a bushel and who sought martyrdom rather than to avoid it. It was well known to the authorities that large numbers of Anabaptists had sought asylum in England, but nothing was done about it so long as they kept quiet. The only difference between the Continent and England lay in the fact that England did not search them out whereas the Continental States did.

The attitude toward the Anabaptists and their limited activities appears from the edicts promulgated during the reign of Henry VIII, 1511-1547, against the Anabaptists,

<sup>52</sup> Idem, 155.

<sup>53</sup> Neal, quoting Fox, II, 355.



under which several martyrs were executed.<sup>54</sup> At his marriage to Anna of Cleve, the Dutch flocked to England in great numbers, among them large numbers of Anabaptists. Some of these evidently belonged to the martyr class, men who felt compelled to witness in season and out of season. Of them Neal tells us,<sup>55</sup> "They began to broach their strange opinions, being branded by the general name Anabaptists."

Then came the convocation of Henry VIII, of 1536, a year after the collapse of the Münster kingdom. The "strange opinions" of which Neal speaks, must have been therefore the original Anabaptist heresies of the Münster faction. Not only did they preach, but they wrote down their opinions and thus tried to spread them. This is clear from the law<sup>56</sup> of Henry VIII, promulgated in 1539:

That those who are in any error, as Sacramentarians, Anabaptists, or any others that sell books, having such opinions in them, being once known, both the books and such persons shall be detected and disclosed immediately to the king's Majesty, or one of his privy-councillors, to the intent to have it punished, without favor, even with the extremest of the law.

And yet, these harsh statutes notwithstanding, the Anabaptist martyrdoms during the reign of Henry were few, compared to the large numbers at that time in the country.

These statutes were still in vogue in Edward's reign, and under them undoubtedly the two martyrs mentioned were executed. This was still the case in Elizabeth's reign, 1558-1603, for the Anabaptists were singled out by the queen, as the pet objects of her hatred of non-conformity. In reply to Fox's letter pleading for clem-

<sup>54</sup> Neal, II, 354.

<sup>56</sup> Fox, "Martyrs," II, 440.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, 354.

ency, she declared <sup>57</sup> "their impieties to be damnable, and that she was necessitated to this severity."

As the current of immigration from Holland steadily waxed in volume during her reign, we may conclude that the greater part of the Anabaptists in England kept their traces well hidden. As was the case in Holland, the greater part of them ultimately joined the Church of the land. But the ancient principles were never wholly forgotten; they formed rather a leaven both in the Established Church and in the kingdom; and it is from the mass of these folk, I think, that the ranks of the various non-conformist bodies in England were originally largely recruited. A glance at the map of England will furthermore convince us that the Roundheads of Cromwell mainly sprang from the same districts and counties where these people had originally settled in large numbers. And it is worth considering that when the Brownists sought for a haven of refuge, they did not go to Scandinavia or other countries, but were instinctively drawn to Holland.

Many of the names, even in this day, on the pages of the directories of the cities where the early Anabaptists loved to congregate, and in all parts of England, are distinctively Dutch.

And many of these people not only joined the Church of the land, but they intermarried with the daughters of the land; but the inherited traits of the old view-points remained in evidence, even in their children's children. And thus the tie between the Puritan of England and the Puritan of Holland, yclept Anabaptist, is far closer than is generally supposed.

As late as 1575, when the great stream of immigration had practically stopped, Thomas Fuller could say,<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Neal, II, 360.

<sup>58</sup> "Church Hist.," Cent. XVI, 104.

"Though the Anabaptists have increased wonderfully in the land, as yet the English are free from the infection." Which would seem to indicate that the Anabaptists, in leaving Holland, had largely left behind their self-assertiveness and spirit of propaganda, in which they certainly had not been lacking in the homeland.

The same testimony was borne by John Fox, in his well-known petition for clemency, to Queen Elizabeth. Said he,<sup>59</sup> "I hear not of an Englishman that is inclined to this madness." And again, "I understand there are some here in England, but come hither from Holland."

All of which goes to show that, if they kept up an organization at all, it was done very quietly and that for the greater part they led an unobtrusive, quiet life and that to an extent far greater than we usually think they were absorbed, ecclesiastically and nationally, by their environment. And it is among these men and their descendants that we have to seek for the fathers of the great Baptist Church. No one claims that these Baptists were an indigenous English growth. The claim of vast antiquity for genuine Baptist churches in England, formerly maintained by the older Baptist historians, is shattered by men like Newman, Whitsitt, Lofton, and Vedder.<sup>60</sup>

The fathers of the English Baptists were Dutch Anabaptists, whose views on many of their old doctrines were modified in the course of time, and who had largely been assimilated by the English nation. Whatever views they held on baptism, they were not yet immersionists; that was to come later. The current swept ever to and fro. During the reign of Henry VIII, Brandt tells us: "In the year 1539, thirty-one Anabaptists that fled from En-

<sup>59</sup> Whitsitt, quoting Crosby, 35.

<sup>60</sup> See next page.

gland were put to death at Delft; the men were beheaded, the women drowned." If they were known as Anabaptists there was no peace for them on either side of the channel.

I have neither time nor space to take you to the cradle of the great Baptist Church in England, whence it spread to America and over all the world. For intimate knowledge of the subject, I refer you to Newman's "History of the Baptist Church," in the American Church History series; to the "History of Antipedobaptism," by the same author; to Whitsitt's admirable "A Question in Baptist History"; to Lofton's "The English Baptist Reformation," and to Vedder's "Short History of the Baptists."

In the days of the Reformation, the Anabaptists originated or rather revived the doctrine of adult baptism; the English Baptists, receiving this main doctrine from the Anabaptists, added to it by returning to the ancient general mode of baptism—immersion.

Doctor Whitsitt has undoubtedly forever settled the date of this return, putting it at 1641. Let me repeat here again what I have said before, the baptism by immersion of Richard Blunt among the Rhynsburgers or Collegiants is a regrettable incident. For two reasons. He did not need it, for he had back of him the solid practise of the Church for thirteen centuries. And, if he sought for "apostolic succession," he did not find it. In the first place, because the men who imparted baptism to him invalidated this baptism by their Socinian affiliations. What could a baptism, imposed by them in the name of the Holy Trinity, mean to the recipient? Geesteranus, who introduced this mode of baptism among them, was an out-and-out Socinian, and to the Socinians baptism meant nothing at all. And secondly, because John Batten, who baptized him, being a common lay-

man and not ordained to administer the sacraments, had nothing to impart. As we have seen, on the ground of their refusing to recognize an ordained ministry, the Waterlandians, who were very tolerant on the subject of immersion in the eighteenth century, yet refused to recognize the baptism of the Collegiants and rebaptized, much as they hated to do so, all Collegiants who came to them.

There is therefore something almost humorous in the words of Doctor Whitsitt: <sup>61</sup>

In 1641, these two parties "had met in two companies" and did intend so to meet after this," and these "two companies" did each set apart one to baptize the rest. Mr. Blunt baptizing those from the Jessey church, and Mr. Blacklock those from the Spilsbury church, after Mr. Blacklock had first received baptism from Blunt, who, in his turn, received it in Holland.

1641 then is the natal year of the great Baptist Church. Anabaptism itself had been forbidden under the law by any mode of baptism; but after 1641, *immersion* became the crime.

The earliest prescription of immersion by an English confession of faith is found in Article 40 of "The Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London," 1644: <sup>62</sup>

That the way and manner of dispensing this ordinance is dipping or plunging the body under water. It being a sign, must answer the things signified, which is that interest the saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and that as certainly as the body is under water and risen again, so certainly shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ.

In this same year, 1644, the name "Baptist" was first used,<sup>63</sup> as close a translation as is possible of the Dutch

<sup>61</sup> "A Question," etc., 87.

<sup>62</sup> "A Question," 90. <sup>63</sup> Idem, 92.

word *Doopsgesinde*, then quite generally used to denote the Anabaptists in Holland.

The churches of Helwys and Murton became the mothers of the General Baptists, we are told by Newman,<sup>64</sup> since

before 1624 a controversy had arisen as to the duty of Christians, the lawfulness of oaths, magistracy, and warfare, and as to the obligatoriness of the weekly celebration of the Supper.

In many of these we recognize the old familiar doctrines of the Anabaptists. Mrs. Brons mentions the Independents, the Baptists, and the Quakers as the offspring (*Nachkommen*) of the Mennonites. "They lost their name, but the spirit remained alive."<sup>65</sup>

As we have seen the Dutch Mennonites were deeply affected by Arminianism. But so were the English Baptists, and half a century after their birth, in the very year in which they were officially recognized by the Act of Toleration of William III, in 1689, they split on this rock into General and Particular Baptists.

The General Baptists most closely resembled the Anabaptists. According to Mosheim, their creed, as set forth by William Whiston in his "Memoirs"<sup>66</sup> and by Wall's "History of Infant Baptism,"<sup>67</sup> was as follows:<sup>68</sup>

1. They were the only Church of Christ.
2. They immerse once, not thrice; and either in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or only in the name of Jesus.
3. They are premillenarians.
4. They hold Menno's views of the incarnation.

<sup>64</sup> Newman, "Hist. Antiped.," 391.

<sup>65</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 351.

<sup>66</sup> II, 461.

<sup>67</sup> Lat. Ed., 1705.

<sup>68</sup> Mosheim, III, 249.



5. They consider the Noachic law binding on the Church.

6. They are soul-sleepers.

7. They believe in extreme unction.

8. Some keep both the Lord's Day and the Sabbath.

Whether Mosheim was well informed or not, so much is certain, that the present-day Mennonites claim the General Baptists as their true children and point to the Particular Baptists as stray children; these follow Menno, those Calvin.<sup>69</sup>

The Particular Baptists, originally the weaker party, were destined to win the long-distance race. Newman has truly said of them: <sup>70</sup>

It remained for the Particular Baptists (Calvinistic) formed by a secession from a London Congregational Church, in 1633, to embody antipedobaptism in a form that, animated by the missionary spirit, has proved highly effective. In this form during the last century, its progress has been marvelous, and there seems to be no limit to its possible achievements.

And what are we to say to the claim made by Mrs. Brons, that the English Independents and Quakers were the offspring of the Dutch Anabaptists? May I quote what the keenest author on Puritanism, Dr. J. Gregory,<sup>71</sup> has to say on the subject?

The Anabaptists were Puritans before Puritanism had sprung into recognized existence and held subsequently all that the Puritans afterward contended for.

Look at the famous Cartwright principles:

1. That the names and functions of archbishops and archdeacons should be abolished.

<sup>69</sup> Brons, *T. oder M.*, 356.

<sup>70</sup> Newman, "Hist. Antiped.," 393.

<sup>71</sup> "Purit.," 176.

2. That the apostolic order and offices should be revived, namely, bishops and deacons; the former to preach and conduct worship, the latter to attend to the ministration of the poor.

3. That the church should be governed by its own ministers and not by bishops, chancellors, and nominees of archdeacons.

4. That each minister should have charge of a particular congregation, and not exercise supervision over others.

5. That no minister should put himself forward as a candidate for the ministry.

6. That ministers ought not to be created by the authority of the bishop, but to be openly and fairly chosen by the people.

Now tell me, was there anything in their ecclesiastical environment which could suggest these principles? Is it not self-evident that these principles were inherited?

And have we not met them one and all, as the age-long principles of the Anabaptists? Where did they get their sober ideals of life, of dress, of speech? Where their abstemiousness and separateness from the world? The answer lies in the seed that was sown by the refugee Anabaptists in England. It had lost its identity for a while, but it had leavened with its views of life a portion of the English Church and had thus created the Puritan tendency.

And was it different with the Brownists, from whom later on the Congregational Church in America was to spring?

Brown preached in Norwich, one of the great centers in which Dutch Anabaptists found asylum. They formed at that time "full half of the population of the city."<sup>72</sup> What, in view of this intimate and daily contact with these folk, is one to say of Brown's principles, as laid down in his "Life and Manners of True Christians," 1582? Says he: <sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Gregory, "Purit.," 127.

<sup>73</sup> Idem, 128.

The Church planted or gathered is a company or number of Christians or believers, which, by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ and keep his laws, in one holy communion. The Church government is the Lordship of Christ, in the communion of his offices, whereby his people obey his will and have mutual use for their graces and callings to further their godliness and welfare.

Again the same familiar note we have heard so often before in the writings of the Anabaptists. Says Gregory,<sup>74</sup> "They claimed a kind of divine-right democracy."

And that precisely was the Anabaptist ideal—absolute individuality, but all this individuality controlled and absolutely ruled by the will of God. What of the polity of these Brownists, of their church organization, of their church officers, of their absolute local autonomy? Again the key to unlock the door of mystery must be found in the Anabaptist leaven, in England, for several generations.

Driven away from England, the Brownists settled in the Netherlands; a group at Middleburg, another at Amsterdam, still another at Leyden, where they were everywhere in constant contact with the *Dooptgezinden*. And from the Leyden group the celebrated "Pilgrim Fathers" went forth who, in 1620, sailed on the Mayflower from Delfthaven, to plant the banner of Independency on the North American mainland, and ultimately to perpetuate their principles in the founding of the Congregational Church.

And where again did the Quakers receive their mysticism, their quaint separateness of dress and customs, their faith in the leading of the Spirit in their own leadership, their abhorrence of violence and war and arms and the oath, their antidogmatic and anticonfessional ideas?

<sup>74</sup> Idem, 129.

Unquestionably from the same source. For although Fox spoke harshly against them, grouping them all together under the hated name "Anabaptists," he adopted for his followers the very principles which they held dear.

And thus I have come to the end of my story. Has it been worth while to tell it? Are not these Anabaptists, of whom most of us knew so little, worth knowing?

For better or for worse they have exerted an influence far wider and deeper than their numbers warranted.

Shaken, bruised, and broken by persecution; torn by inward schisms and divisions; animated by a spirit of courage and hope such as the world has but rarely seen; strong in their weakness; notwithstanding all their departures from the faith, like the Moravians, still centering their all in Christ—they stand till this day.

I may close with a word of Menno to the churches:

Hold fast continually to the spirit of Christ, to his doctrine and example, if you would not deceive yourselves. For every spirit which is not satisfied with Christ's spirit, doctrine, and example, is not from God and will be robbed of the light of saving truth.

Do the Dutch Mennonites measure up to this farewell word of their founder?



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